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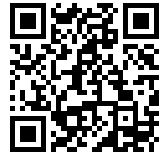

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STATEMENT

OF THE DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN THE PROFESSION

OF THE

REFORMED CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

AS ADOPTED BY SECEDERS;

AND THE

PROFESSION CONTAINED IN THE

NEW TESTIMONY AND OTHER ACTS,

LATELY ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSOCIATE SYNOD;

PARTICULARLY,

ON THE POWER OF CIVIL MAGISTRATES RESPECTING RELIGION, NATIONAL REFORMATION, NATIONAL CHURCHES, AND NATIONAL COVENANTS.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

REASONS

BY THE MINISTERS WHO PROTESTED AGAINST THE ABOVE ACTS OF SYNOD, FOR CONSTITUTING THEMSELVES INTO A SEPARATE PRESBYTERY; WITH THE DEED OF CONSTITUTION, &c.

PUBLISHED, AT THE PRESBYTERY'S DESIRE,

BY THOMAS M'CRIE,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, EDINBURGH.

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1807.

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George Halliday His Book
Steal not this Book for [illegible]
Shame you see the owners name
And God will say in that [illegible] where
is the Book that he I lote away
again George Halliday is my name

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THE Ministers who protested against the enactment of a New Testimony and some other late Deeds of the General Associate Synod, having constituted themselves into a distinct Presbytery, and appointed their Deed of Constitution, with some Reasons of it, to be published, reckoned it proper that this should be accompanied with a fuller statement and explanation of the principal heads of controversy between the Synod and them.—Having recommended it to some members to prepare materials with this view, a draught was produced and read before them, which they appointed the Subscriber to arrange and publish with all convenient speed. But as they had not an opportunity of deliberately revising the whole, they cannot be considered as responsible for every particular expression or sentiment in the Statement. Nor is it to be understood that they have no other objections against the Narrative and Testimony, or grounds of dissatisfaction with the proceedings of Synod, previous to the enactment of these, besides those which are here brought into view. Dissents were separately given in by particular brethren, from which they never saw cause to recede; and some charges were mentioned or referred to in the last of the remonstrances, which are not fallen from; although they could not be discussed in this publication. The Presbytery jointly, or individual members of it, retain their right of explaining or enlarging the grounds of contending, as they may see cause.

THO. M'CRIE.

EDINBURGH,
April 10, 1807.

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ERRATA.

In page 23, line 20 from the top, there is omitted a reference to *Villars' Essay on the Spirit and Influence of the Reformation of Luther.*

In p. 52, line 16 from the foot, for "added," read "made additions unto."

In p. 77, line 12, for "act in these," read "promote these."

In p. 83, line 18, for "secure," read "secure to."

In p. 142, line 3. from the top, for "Ab abusa ad usum not," read "Ab abusu ad usum non."

In p. 189, line 6, for "the ministers," read "the Presbyterian ministers."

STATEMENT,

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STATEMENT, &c.

SECTION I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECT OF DISPUTE.

ALL who have any acquaintance with the controversy between the General Associate Synod, and the Protesting Brethren who have been compelled to a separation from it, may readily believe, that it is with deep concern and great reluctance that the latter come forward at last to address the public on that subject, and to bring such heavy charges against the Associate Judicatories and the religious body with which they were so intimately and so long connected. Controversies with adversaries of any description, and on the most necessary subjects, are in themselves not desirable, and often productive of disagreeable consequences. But they are much more painful when they arise among brethren and church-members, previously connected by the strictest ties of public profession, by habits of friendly intercourse, and bonds of private affection. They would be imprudent and unwise men indeed, regardless of their own and the public peace, they would scarcely deserve to be accounted Christians, who, for no cause, or for trivial reasons, would break through these, and forego the advantages and comfort of living together in unity and harmony with those with whom they took sweet counsel, and went to the house of God in company. But all who are acquainted with the sacred laws of religion must know, that, amiable and valuable as peace is, there are some things that ought to be preferred unto it: truth and duty to God have still superior claims. Peace, though earnestly pursued, cannot always be obtained; and the friendship of men may be

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purchased, and the external fellowship of a church cultivated, at too great an expence.

They have long had patience and kept silence. For a course of years they have tried more private and peaceable means of maintaining the principles which have been attacked, of asserting their rights, and pleading the cause which they viewed as in danger; in the hope that the crisis to which matters have been brought might be averted, and the necessity to which they are now reduced prevented. They have the satisfaction to say, that they have not been the first to introduce these disputes into the church-courts, or to bring them before the public. Though their brethren should a thousand times charge them with causing or following divisive courses, and though ignorant persons should receive these charges against them, merely because they are the minor part, and cannot go along with the majority in adopting a different profession, their consciences fully acquit them, and were a detail of facts to be given, which however is not at present proposed, they doubt not but it would acquit them also in the opinion of all impartial judges. Their brethren themselves, and all who have observed the proceedings on both sides, can bear witness that they have all along stood on the defensive; and that they have never taken any step that had the remotest tendency to separation, but as they were compelled by some active procedure on the other side, some new measure importing innovation and imposition, which, if yielded unto, would have driven them, with the body to which they belonged, from the ground which they formerly occupied. The protestations which they entered, and the measures which they took in pursuance of these, and which have been most offensive, were necessary in their circumstances, and as a minority, for maintaining that ground, and resisting the tide of innovation. And they are now in a manner forced into the field, after all regular attempts to check the progress and establishment of a new system, and to preserve the peace and unity of the Associate Body, on the basis upon which they had long been settled, have proved ineffectual.

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Private animosities, personal injuries or disgusts, have, as far as they know themselves, no share in producing or keeping alive this contest: it proceeds solely upon public grounds, and is influenced by an indispensible sense of duty. Though inclination might still prompt them to keep silence, and to suffer all the misrepresentations and obloquy which ignorance, artifice, or prejudice have cast upon their sentiments and conduct; though they should refrain from a vindication of their ministerial character and rights, when so injuriously attacked;—a neglect and desertion of the public cause, which they are engaged to the utmost of their power to support, would be highly culpable. However little they may be able to do for stemming the swelling tide, altogether to sit still, in such a dangerous time, would be pusillanimity and false prudence, unfaithfulness to God and the generation, and unkindness to their brethren whom they see going astray.

The protesting brethren are sufficiently aware that the spirit and taste of the present age tend to make men averse from paying proper attention to the discussion of religious questions, however needful and important. Many have contracted a general prejudice against every thing that appears in the shape of disputation or contending. Even some who make great pretensions of regard to religion have unawares caught the spirit of the times, and either indiscriminately condemn or superciliously disregard all controversy, as if it were unprofitable to Christians, and necessarily prejudicial to the interests of religion. Nothing can be more unreasonable than such an opinion; and to act upon such a false maxim must be productive of the most dangerous consequences. Because there have been ages of wrangling among scholastics about impertinent and frivolous questions; because too often in party-disputes, men have lost sight of the great ends of public edification in the unfolding and vindication of truth; because they have been more eager about their own reputation than the credit of a good cause, or have indulged themselves

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in personal abuse and scurrility;—these can afford no good reason for running into the opposite extreme of reprobating all contending with individuals or churches about doctrines or practical duties, which are of general interest to Christians, or rendered interesting from particular circumstances and connections. The currency of such a sentiment (directly contradictory to the apostolical injunction *, and uniform spirit of of the word of God), is a symptom of indifference and lukewarmness in religion; it is often the effect of self-conceit, and taken up, as a specious excuse for ignorance and indolence, by those who wish to give themselves no trouble in discriminating truth from error, or in discovering the path of duty. Not to mention the inconsistency of this maxim, with the other flattering pretensions of the age to impartial inquiry and increasing light and improvement; if adopted and indiscriminately applied, it would either convert men into latitudinarians and sceptics, or lull them into the lethargic sleep of implicit faith, such as held all the world for many ages, before the Reformation roused them. Without diligent reading and serious inquiry, without a narrow canvassing of questions, without frequent and even keen debate, and vigorous exertions excited by these,—the system of imposed error had never been detected, and there could not have been a reformation, or a warrantable separation from any church. Every part of religion has successively become, or may become the subject of controversy, through the mistakes or perverse disputings of those who oppose the truth. This weapon is therefore needful. By it the truth has been defended; and a total disuse of it would give free scope to every rising error and evil to prevail without a check.

Divisions are among the offences which our Lord hath said "must needs come," and on account of which a woe is denounced upon the world, as well as on those who are the sinful cause of them †. They have been eminently the trial of Christians, and are particularly so in the present times. But there are necessary purposes to be effected by them; and "bles-

"sed

* Jude, verse 3. † Math. xviii. 7. comp. chap. x. 32—39.

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" sed is he whosoever shall not be offended" in Christ on their account *. They give a loud call to every one in his station, and according to his opportunity, to endeavour to have his judgment informed, impartially to weigh the merits of every public and interesting question, that he may be ready to take his side, and to act such a part as duty and integrity require. Though none should " go forth hastily to strive" either privately or publicly, or delight in wrangling and contention, yet there are times and situations in which the most pacific may be unavoidably involved in contests, which they are not at liberty nor dare to shun. The order given forth by the Lord of hosts sometimes is, " Let all the men of war draw near, let " them come up: beat your plough-shares into swords, and " your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am " strong †." In such cases, for persons to continue indifferent and inactive spectators, or to arrange themselves on any side, as accident, convenience, interest, or safety may direct; to resolve to go on in the beaten and easy track, to follow the multitude, or the mere voice of human leaders,—must be highly criminal. Such conduct, when the precious interests of religion, the welfare of present and future generations, are at stake, must expose them to the charge of minding their own things, and not the things of Jesus Christ and the good of many; and they are in danger of incurring the curse of the inhabitants of Meroz, and the woe pronounced against them that are " at ease in Zion," in the time of her affliction.

When the attention is engrossed by the affairs of the world (as it is to a very high degree with the greater part of professed Christians in the present time), or when, from any other cause, serious enquiry, and even curiosity about religious matters are sopite, ignorance and stupidity with reference to them must reign. A people sunk into such a state, whatever their profession may be, are practically renouncing, and incapable of using the fundamental right of Christians and Protestants, to prove and judge of themselves what is right; and although they may dream and talk of their liberty, they are

* Math. xii. 6. † Joel iii. 9, 10.

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are ready to have the yoke wreathed about their necks, and to be led or driven wherever their masters may be pleased to direct them. There is, indeed, but too great evidence that the mass of the people in Scotland, those of the Secession not excepted, would at present, without much difficulty, acquiesce in almost any change or modification of their religious system, which might be agreed on by a majority of their religious teachers: with a little artful management they might be made Independent or Methodist, not to say Arminian or Arian.

There is still another disposition, very common in present times, which tends to render any information or inquiries about truth and duty fruitless, and to hinder any proper appearance for them. Many have both a capacity to understand and a desire to acquire some knowledge about subjects that come into controversy; they will read, converse, and dispute; having some conviction of right and wrong, they will frequently express their approbation of the one and their condemnation of the other: but this is all the length they will go. Their judgment may be convinced, but their sentiments have no proper influence upon their hearts or conduct. They make no open or consistent appearance for the truth when injured or opposed, they will not disarrange their connections, or risk their ease, convenience, interest, or reputation in its support. They will sometimes pay a just compliment to it in speech, while in practice they desert and dishonour it; like those mentioned by the poet, who are loud in the praises of virtue, while they suffer it to starve. They will sometimes condemn and lament many evils which yet they support, or concur with those who do so. This is even something worse than sinful ignorance or indifference; it is plain dishonesty. It flows not from defect of light, but from want of conscience and religion. To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin. Many persons of this description have been found in all corrupt churches, and in degenerate times. Those churches must be far gone in degeneracy, whatever their avowed system may be, when their teachers and members can say and unsay,

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unsay, pretend to dissent and yet conform, can assent to whatever is demanded of them, and acquiesce silently in changes made from time to time by a majority, though opposite to what they formerly professed, and without or contrary to conviction. Such a disposition, though manifesting itself in smaller matters, is an alarming symptom, as it indicates a want of conscience and integrity, which would operate in things of the greatest magnitude.

The subjects of controversy which arise in the Christian world are very various and diversified in their kind. Some of them may, doubtless, be of greater and some of less real or apparent magnitude and utility. Some of them respect the peculiar doctrines of faith, or the instituted worship and government of the church, which depend upon revelation; others more immediately respect articles in natural religion, God's moral government or the duties of men, which are discernible by the light of nature as well as the Bible. Sometimes they are more simple, sometimes more complex. Any of these in their turn may become the peculiar matter of contending. Whatever belongs to the system of religion and morality has its own place, importance, and use. None of its articles are so small that they can be warrantably relinquished or accounted indifferent; and no truth or error can be so simple as to stand alone or detached from all others. The duty of testifying and contending, therefore, is not to be confined to some things, or to one class exclusively of others, nor doth it depend upon the comparative importance of these, much less upon mens opinion of that importance. "For whosoever (saith "Christ) shall break one of these least commandments, and "teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of "heaven;*" and, "he that is unfaithful in that which is least, "is unfaithful also in much," and so on the contrary †. This has been the uniform doctrine of all sound casuists, and was hitherto current among both bodies of Seceders, and is still applied by them against the tenets of some other denominations in the land; though of late they have varied their language, in

* Mat. v. 19. † Luke xvi. 10.

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in reference to the several points brought into dispute by their respective Synods, when the new scheme of principles was to be patronised, and the former discarded to make room for its introduction. The doctrine is palatable and commodious, and the people love to have it so; as by its aid they may get rid of many things which they do not chuse, or which it may prove inconvenient for them to hold.

It has been avowedly taught, in these controversies, that the question is not, whether such and such doctrines are true and completely proved from scripture, but whether they be of sufficient or so great importance as to be maintained in the profession of a church; and that such articles as are of less importance ought to be struck out from standards, in order to retain the fellowship and labours of those who call in question or deny them:—A doctrine of pernicious tendency; by which, if once admitted, one article may be struck out after another from the profession of a church; for there is no certain criterion by which the limits can be fixed. It is of near affinity to the capital Socinian error that would subject all the particular doctrines of Christianity, and contents of the Bible, though given by divine revelation and authority, to the subsequent decision of human reason, as to their intrinsic truth and propriety. After we find so many articles confessedly true in the Bible or in a Confession of Faith, we must sit down and judge, or somebody for us, which of them are of sufficient importance to be retained, and how many of them are of so little value as that they may be sacrificed to the pleasure, or exchanged for the more useful services or desirable fellowship of men who disown them. And in this manner the scale of latitude ascends upward to the highest degrees; the Arminian, the Arian, and the Socinian usually inculcating on people that the points of difference between them and the orthodox are very insignificant, questions of words and doubtful disputations;—that it is of small moment whether Jesus be God, or a superangelic being, or mere man; whether the Holy Spirit be a person, or a divine attribute, or virtue.—Indeed, men are altogether incompetent judges of the value of

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any truth viewed in its connections, and the extent of its possible influence; nor can they know the full import of one error or evil, which, if once admitted and allowed to operate, may be accompanied with a train which an infinite eye only can trace. Nor is it left to the choice of individuals or societies what shall be the particular difficulties or dangers with which they may have to conflict, or what may be the special duties to which they are indispensibly bound. The place of persons' birth, their situation in the world, their connection with nations and churches, with present and former generations and transactions, must give them a peculiar interest in these, and subject them to special obligations beyond others. It is incumbent on persons to attend unto these, as well as to those duties and obligations which are common to all Christians, in every period and place of the world; and often the former become a more distinguished and immediate test of faithfulness than the latter.

The questions which in modern times have been keenly agitated both in the political and religious world, which of late have been introduced among Presbyterians and dissenters of all denominations, and more especially into the different Synods in the Secession, whose proceedings and decisions upon them have produced divisions in both,—are not questions of a late origin; nor are they in their nature interesting to one nation or time only, or to any one religious denomination; though to some they may be interesting in a peculiar manner. In whatever light the idle talker or designing partizan may affect to represent them, or however trivial they may appear to the superficial thinker, incapable of discerning their extent and different bearings, they are highly important, nearly connected with the honour of God and the interests of the Redeemer, the welfare of nations and churches. The bare mentioning of their principal subjects, or the very proposal of some of the primary kind, which draw along or comprehend a great number of concomitant and consequential ones, one would think might be sufficient to convince any considerate person of their import-

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ance: the proper exercise of human authority, and the rights of conscience, with their relations, extent, and due limitations; —the duty of civil rulers, with reference to things religious and ecclesiastical; —reformation; —national settlements; —covenants and oaths of religion, with their obligation; —the duty of adhering to the religious profession and reformation of past periods, and of prosecuting them in present or future times, with the lawful and scriptural manner of doing this; —change of public standards and subscriptions; —with all their correlates. A determination of one or two of the primary points (and they have now been judicially determined), virtually and consequentially determines all the rest, so far as they have been brought into controversy in these disputes.

In all false schemes or systems, there is usually some radical or fountain-error, whence the rest do flow, and to which they may all be traced. The two first of those mentioned in the above enumeration (the proper exercise of human authority, and the rights of conscience), are evidently most general in their import, and extensive in their influence; and to those who are acquainted with the late controversies it will appear, that, from the new views that have been adopted respecting the one or the other of these, or rather, in their relation to each other,—all the late changes in other doctrines or points of public profession, have proceeded. The question, as it has at last come to be discussed, may therefore be summed up in this general one; Whether may the authority of civil rulers be exercised in various ways about matters of a religious nature, and about the church of Christ; or, do the natural rights of private judgment, or the liberty of conscience, belonging to all men, and the peculiar nature and independence of the church of Christ, render such an exercise of that authority unwarrantable?

Though there are particular doctrines in religion which in themselves, and taken apart, may be allowed to be more important, and to affect more immediately the faith and hope of Christians; yet there are few of the practical kind,

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in which the best interests of mankind, and the general state of religion in the world are more deeply concerned, than in the right or wrong determination of this question. It affects men, whether considered as subjects of God or of princes, as ministers or members of churches reformed or unreformed, and more especially those who are citizens of reformed states, and who belong to churches that have made peculiar professions, and been brought under particular engagements in reference to this subject.—Government and religion may be said to comprise under them the chief good of man in this world, including his external and spiritual felicity. Any one of them separately forms a great and important object of discussion, much more when they are considered in their union and mutual relation; as they always are in the present question, which is neither merely political nor purely religious, but of a mixed nature. The above great question, and other primary ones connected with it, as they result not from the peculiar nature of Christianity, nor the constitution of the Christian church, catholic or particular, (although they are applicable to these); so in their abstract view, and when treated in a general and argumentative way, they are to be examined and determined upon the principles of reason and the law of nature, where revelation is wanting, and where this is enjoyed, upon the joint and concordant principles of both: not upon the ground of human authority, or according to the confined and imperfect model of any existing constitution or laws.

Such questions as the following are evidently of very general concern: Is religion, in any view, a proper object of human laws? Ought not religion, as well as reason, to be considered as belonging unto man, not only individually but also socially? and is not religion necessary not only to the welfare, but, in some degree, to the very existence of civil government and morality? Ought all people and nations to have a religion publicly professed, authorised and maintained among them? Ought the church of Christ, as an external and visible society, where it is introduced, or where revelation is known,

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to be recognized by the legislature? Ought it, or a pure system of religion, which can justly claim a divine warrant, not only to enjoy common protection and indiscriminate toleration, but to be positively countenanced and supported by government; and the gross impieties, abuses, and disorders, prevailing in corrupt societies or among individuals, to be reformed or repressed by the authority and means competent to bodies politic, as well as by those which are purely spiritual or ecclesiastic, when the interests of both societies or the public good require? Are civil and religious societies in their nature incapable of union and co-operation? Or, are kingdoms and churches by institution, because distinct, rendered incapable of stipulated connection, and of affording mutual benefit and aid? May they not have certain common interests and objects, about which they may unite in the means competent to both, and employ, with regard to these, the powers, means, and sanctions peculiar to each, without confusion or encroachment upon the province or privileges of each other? Is religion merely a personal concern, so that mens natural rights and liberties, in any thing respecting it, cannot fall under the direction of public authority, and the restriction and controul of laws? Has every man, upon the plea of conscience, an unbounded liberty of professing and acting in all religious matters, without being accountable to, or liable to restraint by human authority, except in the case of attacking the existence or disturbing the peace of civil society *as such?*—These inquiries, and others that have a near affinity to them, it is obvious, belong either to the social world at large, in whatever age or country, or at least to all Christian nations and churches without exception. Accordingly, it is well known to those who are acquainted with the history of society and of literature, that men in every department, writers of every description, ancient and modern, more especially since the commencement of the noted æra of liberty and letters in Europe, have been eagerly employed in the discussion of them. The philosopher, the politician, the lawyer and the divine,

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divine, the infidel and the Christian, authors without and within the pale of national establishments, have, in their turn, treated and attempted to settle them, although in very different ways, each in his own manner and for the particular purposes which he had in view.

On some of the principal points, however, there will be found a very general agreement, both in the sentiments of the learned, and in the practice and legislative conduct of civilized and Christian nations. How the Protestant churches have determined these questions, how the learned in them have taught, and how those in public authority in them have acted, it is not difficult to ascertain. Though, in some of the subordinate and more intricate points connected with this subject, they have sometimes differed; and though, in the application of the general principles, there are undoubtedly evidences of some of them having gone to extremes on both hands; yet until late times the primary doctrines, that civil authority is applicable to religious matters, the propriety of a national church, and of civil establishments of religion were unanimously admitted; or the opposition to them was confined to some obscure or turbulent sects, or to some more bold innovator, dogmatic heretic, or avowed libertine.

An account of the concurring sentiments of the churches and of the learned upon this subject, especially since the commencement of the Protestant reformation, as also of the rise and progress of the opposite opinions, formerly known by the name of Sectarian, and at present vulgarly termed *new light*, tracing these down, under their different modifications, and the various shapes in which they have appeared in preceding periods, to the time of their introduction and gradual spread in Scotland, until they have acquired their present surprising ascendancy,—might be both instructive and entertaining. But the brevity and immediate design of this statement forbids entering on any particular detail of this kind. The following sketch may suffice:—At an early period of the Reformation on the continent, certain sects of separatists

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separatists from the body of Protestants appeared, who began to propagate peculiar opinions about the nature and exercise of the office of civil magistrates among Christians, the nature of the kingdom of Christ, and Christian liberty, especially in reference to religion, as to which every person and sect were to be left to their own humour or liking, without respect to public authority. Among these, the Anabaptists, Socinians, and those denominated Libertines, were distinguished; by whom commotions were excited in various places, both in civil and ecclesiastical society. In Holland, during the first part of the 17th century, after the difference between the Calvinists and Arminians came to a height, the latter (though they had formerly carried the magistrate's power *circa sacra* higher than was allowed by the reformed churches), finding the States-General and greater part of the inferior magistrates unfriendly to their cause, began to impugn their authority to interfere with causes of a religious nature, and pleaded for an almost boundless toleration, and the exemption of all peaceable subjects from the acts of synods and magistrates in matters of conscience. In England, during the sitting of the Westminster Assembly, after some progress had been made for settling religion by authority, according to the Solemn League, a number of sectaries appeared, who, in order to hinder a new national establishment, vented these tenets in their discourses and writings, and insisted for a general toleration and liberty; and rested not, until those who favoured their scheme wrested the sword out of the hands of the Presbyterians, and seized on every part of the government, which they employed for their own purposes, involving all the three kingdoms again in troubles and bloody wars, and restricting considerably the due freedom of the ministry and ecclesiastical courts; though under the republic and the usurpation of Cromwell, for political reasons, the laws that had been made for settling religion were never repealed, but only restricted and new-modelled.

Under the tyranny of the two brothers, Charles II. and James,

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James, when all classes of dissenters were suffering under the severity of the laws against nonconformity, some of these principles were occasionally urged to expose the injustice of persecution, especially in the disputes occasioned by the acts of indulgence and toleration. In these the Quakers took an active part, and carried the doctrine of toleration to the greatest latitude; on which account their leader, Pen, became a favourite at court, and a tool for the introduction of Popery, under that specious pretext, immediately before the Revolution in Britain. About this time, some philosophical writers and political defenders of the rights of subjects, against the encroachments of arbitrary power and the system of persecution which had long prevailed, among whom Mr Locke was the most eminent and successful, while they laid down and defended the juster prineiples of free government, did not always observe the due limits, nor in every point accurately explain or warily balance the rights of rulers and subjects, particularly in reference to religion: though they did not go to the extreme into which those who succeeded them have gone. The affinity that appeared in some points between the maxims of government adopted at the Revolution and the tenets of the sectaries, gave to the latter greater credit and currency. Their apparent tendency to rid the world of the infernal monster Persecution, disposed many to entertain a favourable opinion of them, and they were embraced by numbers, especially among Dissenters in England and Ireland, and among the warm advocates for the Whig-interest of different religious creeds; among whom were a number of free-thinkers, who by their writings began to disseminate these principles, as some of the same character abroad had artfully and successfully done. These principles were introduced into Scotland more lately than into the neighbouring nation, and did not spread so rapidly here. During the course of the 18th century, after they were vented by Mr Glass, they were condemned, and censures passed upon their abettors, both by

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by the National church and by the judicatories of the Secession. Of late, however, they have been circulated very extensively, being not only warmly cherished and patronized by the various classes of Anabaptists and Independents, but having also leavened Presbyterian churches, and, among the rest, the two large bodies of Seceders.

These opinions, being gradually combined with the principles of civil liberty, began to be extolled as essential to it, under the imposing names of freedom of inquiry, right of private judgment, rights of men, &c. But the scheme, in all its extent, and as avowed in modern times, goes beyond the genuine principles of Protestant and British liberty, civil or religious, is incompatible with the spirit of the laws and the established system of government still subsisting in free states and kingdoms, and even exceeds the bounds to which the abettors of it, who had any regard to religion, ventured to carry it in former times. Indeed, the modern theory which teaches the total disunion of civil polity and religion, and that matters of religion pertain not to the province of civil rulers, has not yet been adopted into the constitution or code of any civil legislature. Attempts were made to reduce it to practice in two modern republics, whose revolutions have made such noise in the world *; but even in these the theory has not been fully realised, and the experiments that have been tried are very far from exhibiting, by their process and effects, a proof of its wisdom and utility.

The scheme was not, however, carried to its most dangerous height, until it was adopted, and refined from the adhesion of religious fanaticism, by sceptical writers, philosophical infidels, and modern pretended illuminati, who employed it artfully and covertly to undermine and shake all established systems of religion, and to deprive them of the support of government; partly out of hatred of all church-power, partly from pride and fondness to oppose common sentiments; sometimes to humour the spirit of irreligion,

* France and America.

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irreligion, and libertinism among the great and fashionable, or the propensity to licentiousness among the populace, and at the same time to accommodate themselves to unprincipled rulers and politicians, who wished to be free from the restraints of religion, and the burden of caring for it, and whose sole aim and end were the advancement of their secular interests and policy. To some of these writers we owe the warm defence of the doctrines of the absolute sovereignty and uncontroulable empire of conscience, of a moral sense, taste or feeling, the infallible test of truth, the independent arbiter of right and wrong in morals and religion. And as Archimedes demanded but one point on which to stand to fix his lever, and he would move the world; so if they could but once firmly establish this one position, upon which to rest their apparatus, they know it might be possible to heave up and remove the whole incumbent weight of government, civil or ecclesiastical. No authority would be left in these matters to interfere, but what would suffer every man to do what was right in his own eyes, as in those days (happy days surely!) when there was no king in Israel.

Sectarian principles are opposed to unity and uniformity in religion, and to the proper means for promoting these, whether by civil or ecclesiastical society. In the present controversy they are considered chiefly with reference to civil authority, and are so called, not only because they have been commonly held by sects that had separated from the great body in Protestant churches, but also on account of their tendency to produce and foster endless sects, by patronising, instead of checking all sorts of religious opinions and different forms of worship. Though they are sometimes denominated a new scheme, or new principles; and sometimes new light, because they are recommended, in our times, as the effect of further light and improvements than our fathers were blessed with, yet it will be evident to any acquainted with modern church-history and literature, that, from whatever source they may have been immediately drawn, whether from the religious sectaries above mention-

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ed, the sentiments of latitudinarian and socinianizing divines, or the schools of more modern philosophers, they are far from being new. Every proposition and favourite phrase, the very modes of expression used in argument, explication, or declamation, are but a repetition of what may be found almost *verbatim*, in a variety of productions left by their worthy predecessors. They may indeed be allowed to be new in the mouths and creeds of Scots Presbyterians and Seceders; and to try to incorporate them with their former profession, and render them consistent with their former subscriptions is certainly a new and very bare-faced attempt.

In the foregoing summary account of the origin and progress of these opinions (which the history and writings of preceding ages abundantly confirm), when the erroneous sectaries and licentious free-thinkers are mentioned as the chief abettors of them, for promoting their pernicious designs, it is not meant to charge those persons, of different denominations in the religious world, who, in later times, have openly favoured the same tenets, with being of the same spirit in other respects, or having the same mischievous purposes in view with many of that description. Such a charge, indiscriminately thrown out, would involve too many eminent for learning, probity, and a benevolent peaceable disposition, and also distinguished for piety and known zeal for Christianity. Among the parties professing the most warm attachment to evangelical truth and practical religion, whom the great corruptions in the existing establishments have cooled in their regard, and detached more or less from them, these opinions will perhaps be found, in the present day, to be more widely diffused, and to have met with a more general reception, than among other classes of men professing Christianity. But while we acquit many of those who have embraced and promote the scheme, and in charity absolve them from any such evil intentions, we are not, on that account, to entertain more favourable thoughts of the scheme itself, or to be less alarmed at its hurtful tendency. It has been

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been gradually working like leaven, and may have been unawares imbibed. Many have as yet professedly adopted only some parts of the system, while they startle at admitting the rest, though at the expence of consistency; and some who have embraced certain of the radical errors, whence others spring, may not discern their native tendency, or will not suffer themselves to trace the consequences to their full extent.

The hurtful tendency of the scheme is not yet apparent, as it has not been reduced to practice. Those of a religious character, whether in public or private stations in churches, who have adopted it, are yet in one respect holding it in theory; they have not an opportunity of reducing it to practical effect with reference to political government. This power is not committed into their hands: they are not called to act as governors of nations and framers of constitutions for commonwealths; they are not called into the king's council, nor have they opportunity or influence to direct the consciences of those who rule and conduct public affairs. They do not "bear up the pillars of the earth," so as either to establish them well or to unsettle them.—The scheme has not an opportunity of displaying itself: it is yet in a great measure repressed by the general sentiments of mankind and the old systems of policy. Men who move in a different sphere of life, who live in obscurity, and have little access to know how mankind or particular nations need to be governed, are very ready to form ideal systems, though specious, yet false and impracticable; faults and defects, real or supposed, they may spy, and they think that by their superior sagacity they could make a thorough reform, and rectify all evils at once. The pulpits, too, may resound with new doctrines, and convocations and synods of divines may pass ecclesiastical decisions about the power of rulers; while the higher powers continue to act according to their own ideas, and the political world goes on steadily much in its old course. Although obstinacy too often appears in adhering to established errors, and slighting the

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proposal of needful reformation; yet, on the other hand, it is good that public order and peace are not disturbed by every cry of those who are given to change, and that varying winds of doctrines and new laws, which produce hurtful effects in ecclesiastical society, do not operate directly in shaking the constitutions and peace of nations.

But we are not, on this account, to view these opinions as merely speculative or innoxious in themselves, or with regard to the public state of society. They have a necessary application to the state and welfare of the British government, and of all other nations. They respect relations actually existing, and which must continue to exist, and power with which some are invested, that is continually exercised according to some set of principles and rules. As it is of the greatest consequence what these are, whether conducive to the public good, or the contrary; so it must be of importance what principles are publicly taught and circulated on this subject, by which the minds of the people may be influenced, and the public peace and the exercise of magistratical authority gradually and remotely affected. It must be the duty of all good Christians and patriots, to endeavour to counteract the influence and spread of errors upon this head. The spirit and modes of government, and the opinions and manners of a people, reciprocally have influence upon one another.

History and the experience of all ages shew how powerfully and almost irresistibly government and laws operate upon the mass of mankind: they form, in a great degree, the opinions and characters of the inhabitants of every country. Their religious state and interests, as well as their secular, are in no small degree determined by them. The greater part will be found contenting themselves with the religion which they find previously established or generally practised in the places where they dwell. Almost all conform at first without previous rational inquiry, of which many are incapable, and to which more are indisposed, in circumstances unfavourable to truth. How great an advantage

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vantage then must it be to have authority and public institutions on the side of the things which are true and good; and to preserve these when they have been once settled on such a footing in a nation! Not only to have all public hindrances and legal terrors removed; but to have the minds of people taught and trained to walk in the right way from their youth up, with line upon line, and precept upon precept. That men in the higher and lower ranks of life should have the current of education, conversation, custom, habit, public favour, not excluding worldly interests and rewards, running on the side of true religion and duty. Although infidels delight to declaim against every profession of religion which is sucked in with the mothers milk; and many affect to make light of the result of such a state of things, as prejudice, mere pretence or hypocrisy, yet these are salutary prejudices, if prejudices they must be called, and public benefit arises from them upon the whole, whatever accidental abuses may attend them. Nor are such means inconsistent with, or intended to supersede, but, on the contrary, are subservient, and calculated to conciliate respect and attention unto others which directly tend to produce rational conviction; and particularly to divine institutions, by which the minds of men may be enlightened, their consciences suitably affected, and real, evangelical, and practical religion promoted. The striking influence of corrupt constitutions, in rendering prevalent and permanent ignorance, superstition, idolatry, and imposture, instead of being an argument against every thing of this kind; on the contrary, serves to shew with what good effect, and to what good purposes, political government, properly directed and duly limited, may be employed about religion, not only by counteracting and abolishing such corrupt systems, but also in settling and perpetuating a better. It is unreasonable and absurd to repudiate or contemn common, lawful, or necessary measures for promoting a good cause, merely because they have been, or may be employed by others for maintaining and advancing one that is bad.

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What serious and intelligent Christian would neglect the education of his children in the principles of true religion, because the Papist, the Mahometan, and the Pagan would employ the same means, for instilling into the minds of their youth the false and corrupt principles of their respective systems?

As, on the one hand, government and laws have great influence upon the religious opinions and practice of mankind; so, on the other hand, the stability and peace of existing governments, with any successful efforts for promoting religion, or introducing a reformation when needful, must, under God, depend very much upon the state of the public mind, and general opinion, especially of those who may have greatest influence in society. Governors themselves cannot be fitted for acting their part without previous instruction, and the knowledge of just principles; nor could their measures be ultimately successful, unless a people were prepared to concur with them. And what class of men have it more in their power to enlighten or mislead, to give a bias, right or wrong, to the public mind, especially of the body of the people, than the teachers of religion? To instruct all ranks of men in their duty, to inculcate all the obligations of the moral law, unquestionably belongs to their office. The views therefore which they entertain, and the doctrines which they propagate, on subjects so generally interesting, can never be indifferent speculations, but must be accompanied with corresponding effects. If they should either decline the task of teaching any thing on these subjects, or exert themselves in spreading false notions, which they themselves have imbibed, how can they fail to be blind leaders of the blind; or how can they, or the people that follow them, be free from a large share of the public guilt and calamities which their errors have contributed to produce?

Religion enters into the various affairs of men, and operates upon all their actions. It has had the most important influence upon some of the greatest changes which have been

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been effected in the state of the world at large, and of particular nations. The religious spirit, that prevailed both abroad and at home in the 16th century, had more than half its share in producing and forwarding that great revolution, which terminated in favour of religious and political liberty in so many of the kingdoms of Europe. Without it, the flame would not have been kindled, or would probably have soon been extinguished. Men of this spirit, particularly public teachers, preceded the philosophers, and stimulated the timid and wary politicians. They rouzed the people to consider their rights, and to exert their powers. They instructed, animated, and encouraged princes, nobles, confederating states, and their armies, against the most formidable opposition, and under the most overwhelming calamities; until their perseverance was at last productive of great and extensive advantages. These facts are now admitted, and this honour, through the force of truth, is at last conceded, by modern infidels themselves, to the religious leaders, and zealous promoters of the Protestant reformation. Nor are instances wanting, both in Britain and in other nations, of the pernicious effects produced by a religious spirit, when under the direction of false principles, especially when these apply to political government and its settlements, as far as they have religion for its object. Both of these serve to shew, of what consequence it is to the public good of mankind, that sound principles be entertained, and those of an opposite kind counteracted.

The modern principles, wherever they are embraced, must, in the minds of those who teach or receive them, be applied to every existing government and authority; and these must be approved or condemned, according as they agree with or differ from these principles. As, by a retrospect, they lead men to pronounce a judgment upon constitutions and transactions in times past, they, in a direct manner, attach praise or blame, respect or disregard, to those that presently exist; and they look forward to future changes, to a new political order of things, national or universal,

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versal, upon the projected model. Therefore, in order to form a proper estimate of the nature, tendency, and pernicious effects of this scheme, we must suppose men to be impelled by its principles to action in civil society; we must suppose rulers or subjects, either apart or in conjunction, making the attempt to change, or actually changing, the frame of their government, and the system of their laws, so as to conform them to these principles. What would be the consequence? Every constitution in Christendom must be taken to pieces and altered, in as far as any particular religion (the best reformed not excepted), obtains a legal preference and support. Public securities and privileges in behalf of Protestant churches, obtained at vast expence, would all at once be annulled. Settled provision for maintaining religious institutions, or any mode of Christian instruction by law, would be withdrawn. Fundamental laws in particular states; the social compact, in as far as religion is comprehended in it; with coronation oaths for maintaining the religion of a nation;—must be swept away as rubbish. The great charter securing universal liberty, or license of conscience, would come instead of them all.—Errors and heresies, fanaticism, superstition, and idolatry would reign; and ignorance, irreligion, and infidelity triumph. Were we to speak of the ferment and combustion which this revolution would introduce into the political world, with the previous and violent conflict with the old and established principles of government on this subject, and of the disorder, discord, anarchy, and profligacy, which would spring from the new order of things,—the description, although justified by the reason of the thing, and the former history of mankind, might be regarded as exaggerated by those who cannot trace principles to their native consequences, and who are not aware of the mutual retroactive influence of religion and government. We speak only of the direct and necessary effects of the new scheme, if reduced to practice. It is a scheme which, however charitably we may judge of the intentions of many who patronise it, and

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however far the remoter consequences are from their view, we cannot but regard as fraught with danger both to religion and society. It tends to make people disaffected with, perhaps, the best and soundest part of the constitution under which they may live, and to cause them disdainfully to reject the benefit, and throw off the restraint of salutary laws. It unduly limits civil authority in the sphere of its operation, and disables it from discharging one principal part of its official duty which, according to the word of God, and the doctrine of Protestants, is "to maintain *piety*" as well as "justice and peace *."

To render the ultimate tendency of these principles more apparent to those who cannot trace them to their necessary consequences, let us apply them to the political system of our own country, and let Britain be supposed the scene of future operation. There was a notable period, in which a series of laws were made for advancing and sanctioning a religious reformation, which obtained the approbation of the wise, and a testimony from the good. These have long ago been rescinded by the sweeping act of Charles II.; annulling the authority of the parliaments by which they were made. As these are now politically dead, they must always remain so, and no enlightened statesman must ever propose or assent to any thing like a revival of them. Nor can the existing laws with reference to religion expect to meet with a better fate. All laws ratifying the Protestant religion in Britain, or even recognising Christianity and the Bible, must be set aside. The whole series of laws approving, confirming, and establishing the Presbyterian religion, with the liberties and privileges of the church in Scotland, "to continue without any alteration to the people of this land in all future generations;" whether granted in the more early periods of the Reformation, or in pursuance of the claim of right at the Revolution, the security of which establishment was declared to be "a fundamental and *essential* condition" of the union between the two kingdoms,

 "without

* Confession of Faith, chap. xxiii. § 4. with the scriptures adduced.

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" without any derogation thereto for ever *;" all of these must be given up with, and exchanged for the visionary and undescribed liberty of all religious professions. The coronation oath, by which his Majesty swore that he would invariably " maintain and preserve the settlement of the true Protestant religion, with the government, worship, and discipline, rights and privileges of the church of Scotland established by the laws;"—must be declared null and void; together with that fundamental law of the British constitution, which provides, that none shall ascend the throne of this kingdom who is not a Protestant, or who marries any other than a Protestant. The public provision settled by law for maintaining divine ordinances and religious instruction, must be withdrawn, wholly secularised, and applied to the more laudable and useful purposes of making roads, or constructing bridges, paying subsidies, or carrying on wars.——It would be a fundamental law in the new constitution, that no part of the national property should henceforth be applied to any religious purpose whatsoever, and that no legislature should have it in their power to vote any sum for promoting Christian knowledge in ignorant, poor, or desolate places at home, or for Christianising extensive regions of the empire abroad. Public institutions for education, as far as they have religion for their object, and as securities respecting the religious principles of teachers are appointed by government, would also be abolished; as implying that the promoting of religion belonged to civil authority, and impinging on the corner-stone of the new scheme, that, " in matters purely religious, civil rulers have no right to judge for any but themselves."

The laws against blasphemy, profaneness, and the propagation of infidelity would be found incompatible with the new opinions. Those which were made for promoting the sanctification of the Sabbath, and for preventing the profanation of that holy day, cannot escape in the application of the extensive

* Act for securing the *Protestant Religion*, and *Presbyterian Church-Government*, anno 1707.

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extensive and sweeping principle, that "the power competent to worldly kingdoms respects only the secular 'interests of society." No other institution has contributed more to preserve religion in the world than the Sabbath; and its decent and religious observance among any people must greatly depend upon the enactment and due execution of salutary laws. But it cannot be pleaded for as contributing to promote the secular interests of society, except upon the principle, that the observance of religious ordinances does so; nor can the laws in its favour be successfully or consistently vindicated in any other way, than upon the principle, that magistrates in their official capacity have a concern with religion, and that it is their duty externally to support its institutions. But the admission of the last of these principles, and of the first as a ground for magistratical interference, is totally eversive of the new-light scheme. Neither is the Sabbath one of these things which are known by the light of nature, nor is it an ordinance merely moral, but as far as respects the definite and specified time is of positive institution. The observance of the *first* day of the week is an appointment of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of his church, and contained in the New Testament. According to the new principles, civil rulers can have no right to make laws respecting this ordinance, or add sanctions unto it; their conduct in this matter must be represented, according to the reasoning now current, as an invasion on the prerogative of Christ; as if the king of Spain or the emperor of France should presume to ratify and add his sanctions to the laws made by the king and parliament of Great Britain. Such laws must therefore be repealed, and every one left at liberty to pursue his secular interests or pleasure on that day, to walk or ride, to buy or sell, to plough, or sow, or reap, provided he does not disturb the peace of society.

Such are a few of the pernicious effects which would be produced by the new system. If reduced to practice in Protestant and reformed countries, along with some abuses, it would remove and abolish much that is good and valua-

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ble—institutions conducive to the welfare of society, and capable of being improved to the great advancement of religion and the kingdom of Christ. However much such a scheme of government and reformation may be now cried up as sound policy, essential to the liberties of mankind, and necessary to secure the spirituality of Christ's kingdom; for our part, we do not see how it can be freed from impiety and rebellion against the Lord and his Anointed. Its language is too like to that of those who said, "Let us break "their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us;" it is a refusal to obey the divine command, to "serve the "Lord the Son," which is addressed to nations as well as individuals. It would be an irreligious, an ungodly, an unchristian reformation. If adopted by Britain, instead of reviving the spirit and prosecuting the ends of former reformations, it would blot out her name from among the nations of Christendom, and would expose her to the merited exprobation addressed by God to his ancient people: "Pass over the isles of Chittim and see; and send unto "Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a "thing: Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet "no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that "which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at "this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith "the Lord *!"

Bad as we are, it is hoped that we are not yet prepared for the adoption of this system, and that there are still a number, who, although they may have unwarily admitted some of its leading principles, may be persuaded to pause, reconsider, and contemplate the inevitable consequences to which it leads. Persons, by fixing their attention unmoveably upon certain evils and abuses which attach to, or result from the establishments with which they are acquainted, are in danger of overlooking the more general and extensive good which they are calculated to produce, or may be rendered subservient unto; and, instead of seeking the correction

* Jer. ii. 10—12.

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tion of abuses, and the redress of grievances, they are ready to look forward with big expectations to a total revolution in such matters, without taking into view, or being aware of the infinitely greater evils which would arise from the new order of things. The system which would equalize all kinds of religion in the eye of the law, which proclaims an universal right and liberty in such matters, and deprives religion and its institutions of the countenance and support of human laws;—though it has a specious and inviting appearance, contains in its bowels, like the Trojan horse, an host of evils, which, issuing forth, would spread devastation around, and soon lay the bulwarks and palaces of Christianity in the dust. Many of those who are most eager in procuring its admission within their walls (ignorant of what is concealed in it), may be among the first to lament their credulity, and condemn their rashness when it is too late.

From the preceding observations, it may appear, that the subject of the present dispute is far from being unimportant, or interesting only to few. It concerns the best interests of mankind, and is peculiarly interesting to British Protestants, and to Presbyterians in Scotland. The ministers who have opposed the introduction of the new principles into the General Associate Synod, have always viewed the subject in this general light, and not merely in its reference to the particular state of their profession as a separate religious body. Although in their contendings they have been necessarily called in duty to pay particular attention to the latter, yet they have not lost sight of the former. On the controverted points, Seceders have hitherto maintained no other doctrines, than have been common to the reformed churches, and have been always taught in the public standards of the church of Scotland.

SECTION

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SECTION II.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHANGE OF PUBLIC STANDARDS, AND BONDS OF ECCLESIASTICAL FELLOWSHIP.

BEFORE proceeding to state the difference between the original profession of the Secession, and that which has been lately adopted by the General Associate Synod, it may be proper to make a few observations relative to the change of public standards, and the introduction of new books declaratory of the principles of churches, and the terms of religious communion in them. The following considerations appear entitled to particular attention on this subject.

1. The contents of such books are of greater importance, in reference to the interests of religion, the state of churches, and the duty of church-members, than doctrines or writings of a more private nature. Being of public authority, and settled as subordinate standards, they become the common sentiments of the whole body, and are likely to have greater prevalence and permanency. If any mistakes or errors, therefore, be admitted into them, these must prove of more hurtful consequence, than if they were adopted only by individuals, or occasionally taught. The latter may soon die away, and a church at large may not be infected by them; but, in the other case, being publicly supported and taught, the infection spreads, and there is danger of its being conveyed, as a leprosy, from generation to generation. As books of this kind are employed as standards, or a rule by which the doctrines and practice of a church are to be measured, if the standard be wrong, the rule crooked, all that is measured by it or conformed to it, must be wrong and crooked.

2. As all books of human composure, Confessions, Testimonies, &c. are to be adapted to the necessities and circumstances of times and the situation of churches, so it is readily

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readily admitted that they may vary, and be subject to alteration as to their form, and particular matters contained in them; yet, in churches already constituted, and provided with these in a manner competent for maintaining a faithful profession and communion, changes in these ought not to be attempted, even as to their words and form, lightly, and without sufficient and urgent reasons. Much less ought those who are in office in a church to think, that this discretionary power can be lawfully employed by them to change any article of faith already received, or to loose the obligation which they and other church-members had previously come under to certain standard-books, or particular forms of religious profession, agreeing to the word of God. Nor can they claim a right arbitrarily to impose upon any a new system, different in its import. They are not lords of mens faith: they "can do nothing against the truth, but "for the truth." They cannot dispense with the lawful subscriptions, engagements, and vows by which persons are bound.

Churches, with all belonging to them, having made a profession of religion, and with their mouth, their hand, or deed, having received and engaged to abide by a "form of sound words," a system expressing their faith and duty, have done so to God himself, and not to men, and to him they must perform what they promised. They cannot, therefore, be warranted to change or renounce what they have adopted and subscribed, merely at the call, or upon the authority of men. One principal design of these solemn bonds is to prevent persons from relinquishing any part of their profession, or falling in with changes in a time of general defection by the body of a church. They had a powerful influence upon faithful ministers and professors of the church of Scotland in former times; and were urged by them for exposing the iniquity of innovations in the reformed doctrine, worship, or discipline, and for exculpating from the charges of obstinacy, insubordination, and schism, those

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those who rejected them, and persisted in their former profession and practice *.

3. In such changes, a church may be justly chargeable with declining from her principles and engagements, even when there may not be a direct renunciation or formal contradiction of these. If any doctrine which has formerly been expressly adopted, any evil testified against, or particular duty engaged to, the retaining of which is still as necessary and seasonable as before—be dropped or omitted in the testimony or engagements of a church, when this appears to be intentionally done, and there is ground to conclude that it is with the design of giving up with, and tacitly condemning what had formerly been professed and engaged to, such conduct cannot be cleared from unfaithfulness and apostacy. It is contrary to the express injunction of our Lord, to every church and individual; "that which thou hast, "hold fast." It is the common way in which defection is made from truth and duty, in lukewarm and declining times. In this manner churches may drop one article after another from

* Mr Calderwood proposes the following question respecting the innovations introduced in his time, 'If one or more preachers or professors in 'the said kirk, standing to the kirk's former judgement, and able to defend the 'same by good reason, at least seeing no warrant to the contrary,—may dis-'pense with the said oath, or follow the plurality of preachers and professors 'dispensing with the same? and what power may compel the alteration of 'judgment, or loose the said oath in any case aforesaid?' This question he answers in the negative; and his reasoning upon it *mutatis mutandis*, is strikingly applicable to the present controversy. 'Is any assembly (says he), never so 'lawful, free and formal, able to free us of this oath; let be a pretended assem-'bly, disturbed and divided in itself, and drawing down in one session those 'things which were builded up in many years, and by many famous and nota-'ble assemblies, consenting in one heart. But, as I have said, our oath was with 'consent of the assembly and kirk of Scotland. Seeing we are sworn severally, 'how can the same persons, assembled together in one body collective, dispense 'with this oath, seeing they have sworn to defend during their lives. To con-'sent to any alteration is not to defend during their lives, but rather to betray 'the cause, and incur perjury.—They allege they have not violated their oath, 'because the substance of religion is kept; and only some indifferent points alter-'ed. But I answer, first, that an oath cannot be said to be kept, unless it be in 'all the parts and contents, and in the form and manner expressed.—Every 'point of the Confession of Faith is a note of profession, whereby we profess 'ourselves to be distinguished, either in substance or purity of religion, from 'others. Confessions of faith should not be changeable, as *Hilarius* complained 'of his times, *annuas et menstruas fides de Deo decernimus (we make annual and 'monthly Confessions of faith)*' Calderwood's "Perth Assembly." p. 25. 31.

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from their testimony, as they become cool towards them, or contract a distaste at them, and may rid themselves of them with greater ease than by open condemnation.

General doctrines, and the approbation or condemnation of events not of a late date, must still remain the same, notwithstanding more recent occurrences. If additions to a Testimony be found needful and seasonable in respect of some new occurrences, this can be no proper reason or excuse for changing the state and sentiments of such a Testimony as to former times and events. If right before upon these heads, it must still continue so. Persons may approve of such additions, and the application of principles to recent events, and at the same time may condemn a change and departure from what was formerly adopted and professed. If, under the pretext of making additions, the main design is to alter and new-model the former parts of a Confession and Testimony, there is great reason to complain of unfair dealing *. The changes introduced into the books of the Secession, which are ground of offence and controversy, will be found to respect chiefly such things as are not affected by any late occurrences, and are as proper objects of testimony now as at the beginning: they respect principles formerly owned, and the judgment passed on former transactions.—The unfaithfulness and defection is still more manifest and glaring, when any article which a church had engaged to adhere to is directly renounced, or contradicted by what is introduced into new books and later subscriptions.

4. If in the books introduced in the room of former ones, and of which an unlimited approbation is required, there

* The Committee of the General Synod, who drew up the Overture of a New Testimony, were, at their appointment, expressly restricted to the specific object of preparing a draught for extending the Testimony, or bringing it down to the present time. Yet in prosecution of their own views, not only without any authority from, but in opposition to an express vote of the Synod, they undertook a very different task, that of drawing up a New Testimony, and throwing into a different state and mould the whole profession. The court was so much changed in the course of a few years, that they received from the hands of the Committee, and at last gave their sanction to this Overture. The manner in which this New Testimony was undertaken, without any regular call, affords no favourable presumption as to its design and tendency.

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should be but one article of truth injured, one doctrine changed, or one point of duty to which any were formerly bound denied, either directly or indirectly, plainly or more covertly, no person can conscientiously adopt or subscribe them, however many excellent truths they may otherwise contain, yea, even though the great body of these books was scriptural and seasonably exhibited. This would be like a dead fly in the apothecary's box, which pollutes and renders unsavoury the most precious ointment and odoriferous perfumes. Many are ready to adopt a testimony without farther examination, when they see it contain a great number of truths consonant to the word of God, and opposed to prevailing errors: it is not, however, thus that they would wish to act in the affairs of this life. Although a table were covered with many desirable and wholesome dishes, if there was but one among them of which they were required to partake, that was poisonous, this would be reckoned a sufficient reason for abstaining. If a person was required to set his hand to an affidavit or writing in which he found one falsehood, though all the rest might be true, he could not, as an honest man, subscribe it; much less if it contained a number of falsehoods, or one which pervaded the whole.

5. As a change of standards and public formularies, in the forementioned cases, ought never to be made but upon an evident call, and with the greatest care, so there are situations in which particular churches and religious bodies may be placed, which render this highly improper and inexpedient, as well as times in which the attempt is unseasonable and justly suspicious.

In judging of the seasonableness, the danger or safety of such an attempt, there is more to be attended unto than the abstract lawfulness or practicability. No wise general would think of taking down the ramparts or walls of a fortress, with the view of rebuilding them after a more regular and modern form, if the enemy were in sight, or there was ground to suspect the fidelity and constancy of those who were

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were within. In a time when people are given to change, when novelties and pretended improvements are eagerly followed, when, instead of steadiness and attachment to sound principles, there are strong symptoms of instability, and a disposition to throw off bonds, and renounce former attainments, there is reason to suspect that such changes either proceed from such a spirit, or tend to foster it, and to make way for subsequent and more extensive alterations. He must be a stranger to the present state of the religious world in general, and also of the Secession-body, who has not discerned the prevalence of a disposition of this kind. In such cases, one innovation prepares for another, and is approved by many, chiefly as it renders subsequent ones more practicable and easy. *Obsta principiis,* is at such a time a salutary maxim; and those who do not *resist at the beginning,* may find their opposition at subsequent stages fruitless, and may be silenced by their own principles and example; as soldiers who have weakly and rashly abandoned an entrenchment or outwork to the enemy, have their own artillery turned against them *.

The situation of certain religious bodies with respect to others, who may have common standards with them, to which all are bound, and to which they still profess to adhere, may render changes very improper. It is known that the Westminster Confession, &c. were agreed upon,

* About the year 1616, when the prevailing party in the church of Scotland meditated a change in her worship, they began with the proposal of a New Confession of Faith, which was drawn up and laid before the General Assembly at Aberdeen. The ministers who were attached to the original principles of that Church, although they did not object to any part of the doctrine contained in the New Confession, and although it was directed more immediately against certain errors then prevailing, particularly against Arminianism, yet opposed its introduction as 'a needless and hurtful change,' perceiving that the design was to detach them from their former Confession unto which they were bound by solemn oath, and gradually to prepare them for further innovations.—Yet the same persons afterwards, at the time of the Westminster Assembly, cordially agreed to the proposal of a new Confession, when there was a general disposition to maintain and hold fast the reformed principles and attainments of the Church of Scotland, and when they had a special call to this from the important prospect of England and Ireland joining with them in one Confession, and other standards of religious uniformity. Calderwood's Course of Conformity, p. 58. History, p. 667. 668.

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in pursuance of a solemn oath, to be the common standards of uniformity in religion among the three kingdoms. After such attainments, accompanied with mutual stipulations solemnly ratified, particular parties are not left at the same liberty as formerly. Scotland had formerly to complain of breach of covenant and league on the part of England, in the innovations of the sectaries, and also in the alterations introduced at the Restoration and subsequent settlements there. The Secession body have distinguished themselves above others by adherence to this covenanted uniformity; they testified against departures from it among various classes and denominations of persons, and professed to wait for the time of reformation, when all should again return to it. By departing from this, stating exceptions to common and received doctrines, and forming new standards of their own, they expose themselves more heavily to the charges which they have brought against others, and afford them a plausible excuse for future departures, by pleading that they 'cannot reasonably be secluded from the same privi-'lege' and liberties. This must be attended with very hurtful effects. There is no longer any common standard of a subordinate kind to which both can appeal, which (however lightly many may now affect to talk of this), must be of great utility for settling differences between divided churches, as well as those which arise among persons of the same particular communion. Thus, too, a bar is laid in the way of a desireable re-union, even although all the original grounds of secession and separate communion were removed, and a new partition-wall is raised between the parties, which threatens to divide them for ever.

Religious societies which are in a state of separation from national churches are in danger, through process of time, of losing sight of their original claims, and from an opinion that the grounds of their separation will become stronger in proportion to the number of the differences which subsist between them, are ready to have recourse to new ones which are incompatible with their former contendings and original con-

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constitution. In this manner have the Dissenters in England deserted their original principles, and completely changed their ground. Instead of resting in a testimony against those corruptions which adhered to the church of England, in doctrine, worship, or government, and pleading for the removal of these, and a reformation according to the word of God, the example of the best reformed churches, and former engagements, they proceeded to impugn the constitution of all national or established churches; to call in question the propriety of all established order, or any uniformity in such matters; to condemn all religious tests; to plead an exemption from public standards, and lay aside the use of Confessions of faith as tests of orthodoxy, upon the ground of their being unwarrantable restraints on the rights of conscience, Christian liberty, and freedom of inquiry; and to condemn or renounce various doctrines formerly owned by the Presbyterian Dissenters, in common with the church of England and other Protestant churches. By these proceedings, they have entirely changed the state of their contendings, and virtually condemned their original separation, as not proceeding upon the proper grounds: they have strengthened the prejudices against a just and necessary secession from corrupt churches, and if they have not altogether renounced the important object of their reformation, have relinquished the favourable ground which they formerly occupied in endeavouring this, and lost the claims which were originally due to their remonstrances and petitions to this effect. A process similar to this has been going on in Scotland, and already has made considerable progress in the Secession, new-moulding the religious profession of that body, and changing their constitution, and the whole state of their testimony and contendings. They no longer hold that standard, which they bore in their hands when they came out from the established church, by the display of which they declared themselves a part of the church of Scotland, adhering to her reformed constitution. They have now a new conſtitution, and hold principles of their

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their own, which were rejected by that church in her purest times. And the reformation which they propose, is one very different from that which the Associate Judicatories at the beginning approved, and desired to see revived.

But can these charges be substantiated? Is it indeed so, that the General Synod have changed the ground upon which they formerly stood, and adopted principles opposite to those which they formerly avouched and engaged to maintain? This is what we shall now proceed to demonstrate. The ministers who have opposed the late changes might well have been spared this drudgery. It might have been supposed sufficient that they were called upon to vindicate the former principles, which are now so generally supposed to be indefensible. It might have been expected that those who boast of the acquirement of new and superior light upon those subjects, would have come forward and honestly and openly confessed the change which they necessarily introduced, instead of endeavouring to shelter their innovations under the authority of deeds composed in times of such comparative darkness, and exposing themselves to the charge of first lighting a candle, and then hiding it under a bushel. Yet, for some time past, it has been a principal object to persuade people that there is either no change, or a very small one, that it is rather in form than in substance, in words than in principle. This management must plead an excuse for the particularities in the following statement, which have necessarily abridged the reasoning on different articles. It is not meant at present to mention all the things which are objectionable in the new deeds, or to enter at large into a refutation of any of them: this must be the subject of some future attempt. A statement of the principal ones is proposed; and notwithstanding the evasive, dubious, ambiguous, and not seldom contradictory language which is employed, we doubt not that we shall be able to prove, beyond all reasonable doubt, the justice of the alledged charges.

SECTION

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SECTION III.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL TESTIMONY OF THE SECESSION AND THE NEW DEEDS OF THE SYNOD.

A JUST and adequate view of this subject cannot be obtained without attention to the proper nature and design of the Secession-Testimony. Those ministers who left the communion of the established church, and formed the religious body known by the name of the *Secession*, entertained no new or peculiar principles, different from those which were contained in the standards of the Church of Scotland. With these they were fully satisfied; and complained of deviations from them by the national judicatories, in a course of managements during a number of years. When they found themselves obliged to declare a secession from these judicatories, they composed no new standards, nor did they ever intend their Testimony to occupy this place. It was a seasonable appearance in behalf of the doctrines contained in these standards, in opposition to various defections and errors inconsistent with them. It approved of, adopted, and witnessed for them, in the most ample and unexceptionable manner, as they had been received and owned by the reformed church in this land. On this account they justly viewed themselves as a part of the reformed church of Scotland, and as distinguished from other parties who had objections against her reformed constitution and standards.

Another remark which, in connection with what has just been mentioned, and entitled to particular notice is, that the Secession-testimony was properly and formally a testimony for the reformed profession of the Church of Scotland. It was not a declaration of adherence to certain truths, and of opposition to certain errors, simply on the general ground of their being agreeable or contrary to the Scriptures, the supreme standard; but it was also a testimony to these truths

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truths, as pertaining to the attained and fixed profession of this church, and against errors, as contrary unto and departures from it. This view of it is not taken from any general declaration, nor does it arise from the mere coincidence of the matter contained in the testimony with what is in the Confession and other standards; but it is the *formal* and *specific* nature of that testimony. Of this its title is sufficiently expressive: it is called 'Act, Declaration, and Testi-'mony, for the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Govern-'ment *of the Church of Scotland;* agreeable to the Word of 'God, the Confession of Faith, the National Covenant of 'Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the 'three Nations; and against several Steps of Defection *from* '*the same,* both in former and present times.' To this title it will be found to agree in its whole form and contents. It asserts and testifies for the various truths, as agreeable to the Word of God and also to the Subordinate Standards. Take for an example the first Article in the Assertory part. 'The Presbytery did and hereby do acknowledge, declare, 'and assert, that the light of nature, and the works of crea-'tion and providence, without the aid of tradition or revela-'tion, shew *that there is a God,* who hath Lordship and 'Sovereignty over all; as also, that thereby his wisdom, 'power, and goodness are so far manifested, that all men 'are left inexcuseable; *According to the doctrine held forth* '*from the word of God in our Confession of Faith,* Chap. 'i. § 1. xxi. § 1. And they hereby reject and condemn all 'contrary principles and tenets, that are maintained by Mr 'Campbell, the Socinians, and others.' Again in Article VII. 'Also they acknowledge, declare, and assert, that the 'light of nature is not sufficient to give that knowledge of 'God and of his will which is necessary to salvation, &c. 'according to Confession, Chap. i. x. § 1. Larger Cate-'chism, Quest. 60; and they condemn all Socinian or other 'tenets inconsistent therewith in the foresaid *Catechism Re-'vised,* and particularly Mr Simson's erroneous doctrine,' &c. * In like manner do they testify against errors in the

* Display, vol. i. p. 149. 152.

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the Condemnatory part of the testimony, as contrary to the word of God and our subordinate standards; producing passages from the latter under every article, and summing up the different heads in a manner similar to the following: 'This Presbytery considering that the purity of doctrine 'maintained in this church is very much endangered, by 'the above gross and pernicious errors.—Therefore they 'did and hereby do, upon the weighty grounds and reasons 'above narrated, CONDEMN, as contrary to the word of 'God, our Confession and Catechisms, the several propo-'sitions above mentioned; maintained and defended by Mr 'Simson, viz.' &c †.

This view of the nature and design of the Secession-testimony is agreeable to the express words of Mr Wilson, who had a principal hand in compiling that testimony, as appears from the following among many other passages which might have been produced from his excellent *Defence*. 'In 'the Act and Testimony of the Associate Presbytery, our 'received standards of doctrine, worship, government and 'discipline are particularly applied and laid against the er-'rors that have sprung up in this church, and against such 'corruptions and defections as have taken place therein; 'by which our subordinate standards have been either ob-'scured or perverted as to their genuine sense and meaning, 'and by which also palpable deviations have been made 'from them. Hence in the assertory part of the Act and 'Testimony, the truths asserted are viewed as agreeable to 'the word of God, the supreme standard, and also as agreea-'ble to our subordinate standards. Again, in the condemna-'tory part of the Act and Testimony, the errors, corrup-'tions, or defections condemned are viewed as contrary to 'the word of God and our subordinate standards, received 'and adopted by this church, in her reforming periods. '*Therefore the Act and Testimony of the Associate Presby-'tery is not a new standard of church-communion; far less 'is it to be equalled with our received standards;* but it is

† Display, vol. I. p. 109.

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'an application and declaration of their genuine sense and 'meaning, in opposition to the errors, defections, and corrup-'tions that have prevailed both in former and present 'times.' And he adds with respect to the members of the Associate Presbytery, and all who had acceded to their Testimony; 'they make no other confession, but what has been 'made by this church in her reforming and covenanting times; 'they make no other confession but what this whole church 'and land are obliged by the word and oath of God to make, 'and which this national church, as she goes under the name 'of the established church, doth refuse to make *.'

Such is the nature and design of the original Secession-testimony; unto which all the other public papers, formerly in authority, corresponded. Let us now attend to the New Testimony substituted in its room by the General Synod. A little consideration will shew that it is of a very different kind. It is intitled, 'Narrative and Testimony agreed upon 'and enacted by the General Associate Synod.' The former of these is more particularly styled, 'A Narrative of the 'State of Religion in Britain and Ireland from the period of 'the Reformation to the present time.' Of the nature and design of this narrative, we shall speak more particularly afterwards. To both there is prefixed, 'an Introduction,' at the close of which the Synod state 'the *sense* in which' they 'adhere to several parts of the Reformation formerly 'attained;' and in this is included the sense in which they adhere to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms †. These paragraphs, which are chiefly taken up in declaring the sense in which the Synod do *not* adhere to these standards, shall be considered in a little. In the mean time, it may be remarked, that the approbation and adherence to the Confession, &c. qualified as it is, is not inserted in, and forms no part of 'the Testimony itself,' of that Testimony, unto the doctrines of which alone persons are required to 'express 'an

* Wilson's Defence of the Reformation-principles of the church of Scotland, p. 476. edit. Glas. 1769.

† Narrative and Testimony, p. 9, &c.

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'an adherence' when admitted to communion *.—The express approbation and adoption of the Confession of Faith as the confession of our faith, and of the other subordinate standards, and pieces of reformation, may be seen in the bosom of the former testimony in the 6th article of the assertory part †.

'The Testimony itself,' or, as it is otherwise denominated, 'the Testimony properly so called,' is evidently very different from the original Secession-testimony. The last mentioned, we have seen, was formally and specifically a testimony for the religious profession of the reformed church of Scotland, or for the true religion, as attained by and fixed in that church. The New Testimony is drawn up upon the principle that the church's testimony ought to be taken immediately from the Scriptures, without a reference to the attainments of former times, an opinion repeatedly pleaded for by its compilers, and evidently acted upon in the present instance. Accordingly, the doctrines asserted in it are asserted simply as agreeable, and the doctrines condemned as contrary, to the word of God, without viewing them in their reference to the Confession of Faith and other subordinate standards, and even without mentioning any of these, except perhaps in an incidental way in an instance or two.—Besides, it contains (as we shall afterwards see) doctrines that are contradictory to those of the Confession of Faith, and which were never received into the Confession, or terms of communion of this or any other Presbyterian church. In all these respects it is different from the original testimony of Seceders, and cannot be looked upon as a testimony for the doctrine, &c. of the church of Scotland, in any other sense than as it may contain materially the same truths in most instances with our Confession and Catechisms; which is true as to the confessions or declared principles of different religious bodies, and even those of Independent persuasions.

* Narrative and Testimony, p. 15.

† Display, vol. i. p. 161.

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Another general view of the difference between the original profession of Seceders and that now adopted by the Synod, may be taken from the formulas of questions put to those who are to be admitted to public office *. In the original formula an unlimited and unqualified approbation of the different subordinate standards of the Reformed Church of Scotland, and of the obligation of the National Covenants, is required. Its compilers never thought of qualifying or limiting them by their testimony; and for this good reason, because they did not suppose or believe that there was any inconsistency between them: the Testimony was 'an application and declaration of their *genuine* sense and meaning.' But in the New Formula the approbation of these standards is limited, being in so far only as they agree with the New Testimony. Of the same kind is the approbation required respecting all the former acts and papers of the Secession, which are referred to in the New Formula. See Questions II. III. IV. XI. XII. That doctrine, inconsistent with all of the public deeds there mentioned, is contained in the New Testimony, shall afterwards be shewn; in the mean time, this is apparent from the studied and careful qualifications with which they are all received.

More particularly, in Quest. II. the Westminster Confession (the whole doctrine of which as it was received by an act of Assembly 1647, the candidate formerly declared his sincere belief of, and acknowledged as *the confession of his faith*), together with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, are now only approved 'agreeably to the declaration in the Narrative and Testimony enacted by the General Associate Synod 'in the year 1804;' *i. e.* 'in so far only as they agree' with the Narrative and Testimony. In Quest. II. not only the *second Book of Discipline*, which was sworn to in the National and Solemn League, but also the *Propositions concerning Church-government*, agreed to as one principal part of the uniformity

* The Old Formula may be seen at the beginning of Mr Gib's Display of the Secession Testimony, vol. i. The New Formula is printed at the end of the New Testimony.

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uniformity between the three kingdoms, sworn in the Solemn League, is omitted and thrown out, so that there is no subordinate standard referred to as determining or fixing this matter; which deficiency is but ill supplied by the meagre account of church-government in the New Testimony. In Quest. IV. the acknowledgement of the obligation of the National Covenant and the Solemn League is qualified by the words 'according to the Declaration made 'in the foresaid Narrative and Testimony;' which testimony acknowledges their obligation 'with limitations,' and in various respects enervates and explains away their matter, form, and extent of obligation. It is also to be observed, that in the Old Formula the obligation of the Solemn League was acknowledged, 'particularly as renewed in Scot-'land, with an acknowledgement of sins and engagement to 'duties, in the year 1648;' which clause is expunged in the New Formula. Nor is this to be viewed as a circumstance of trifling moment; for by this renovation, the nation and church of Scotland became solemnly bound to the standards of uniformity which were at that time drawn up and received *. In Quest. V. an approbation of the Narrative and Testimony is substituted simply in the place of the approbation of the Act, Declaration, and Testimony.—In Quest. XI. an approbation is required of the principles about the present civil government, 'as these principles are 'stated in the above Narrative and Testimony;' which statement both in the Narrative and Testimony is extremely defective and partial, as well as contradictory to the doctrine contained in the answers to Mr Nairn. In fine, in Quest. XII. even the adherence to the sentence of the Synod respecting the religious clause of some burgess-oaths is qualified,

* 'The Confession of this church with respect to the doctrine, worship, 'government and discipline, as the same are held forth in the above mentioned 'composures, was particularly made by the Solemn League and Covenant of 'the three nations, which was sworn by all ranks of persons in Scotland, not 'only *anno* 1643, but also *anno* 1649 (1648), after the Confession of Faith, 'form of church-government, and directory for public worship, had been re-'ceived by this church.' Wilson's Defence, p. 475-6.

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qualified, and the candidate is required to adhere to it, 'in 'opposition to all tenets and practices to the contrary, *as 'particularly stated in the above Narrative and Testimony;*' whereas, in these, the religious clause referred to is condemned upon a ground which was entirely and intentionally abstracted from by the Synod, in the original sentence on this point.

The difference between the former profession of Seceders and that which is now made by the Synod is still more apparent from the Introduction to the New Testimony. Not to insist at present upon other particulars, we may observe that the Synod receive the doctrine of the Confession and Catechisms on the head of the civil magistrate's power in matters of religion, '*so far only* as it agrees' with the principles stated in their New Testimony *. Of the supposed reasons (for none are produced, nor ever were produced) for excepting the specified passages in the Confession, and nameless parts of the Catechisms and other public papers, we shall not here speak, nor of the pretext alledged for this exception, from the act of the General Assembly receiving the Confession of Faith, and from the Declaration of the former principles of the Secession on that head. Suffice it here to say, as to the last of these, that as the Synod, by making a garbled quotation at the foot of the page from this Declaration, without giving any particular direction where to find it, shew that they did not consider themselves as justified by the general and uniform doctrine therein maintained; and the compilers of that paper put in an express caveat against such a misapplication of their principles, by declaring, in the very same paragraph, that 'there 'is nothing especially allotted and allowed unto magistrates 'by—the Confessions of the Reformed Churches—but what 'can be argued for and defended' from the same principles which they declare †; and consequently, that there was nothing especially allotted to magistrates in these Confessions which they had the smallest exception against. By cutting

* Narrative and Testimony, p. 12. † Display, vol. i. p. 311.

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cutting off this declaration, which formed a part of the sentence which they quote, as well as by the manner in which they receive the standards, the Synod declare that they are of a different mind from the Associate Presbytery and all Reformed churches, and afford the strongest presumption that they put a forced and private construction upon the words which they quote.

Nor are the exceptions made by the Synod to these standards confined to the single point mentioned above: they are extended indefinitely. For after a profession of strong reprobation of the conduct of those who adhere to standards, *errors excepted*, and after a declaration that 'they *express* 'what' they 'believe to be the doctrines of the Bible' it is added; 'If however there are any expressions used in these 'which may appear to some to be either obscure or incon-'sistent with the following testimony, the Testimony is to 'be considered as declaratory of the sense in which we ad-'here to them.'

If the meaning of this were, that these 'expressions' which appeared to some 'obscure or inconsistent' were still really consistent with the Testimony, which declared their genuine meaning more plainly, there would not be the same reason for objection here. But it cannot escape notice that the Synod have spoken with the greatest ambiguity, as to their adhering to expressions, and of the sense in which they adhere to them. For example, one principal reason for 'casting the Testimony into a new mould,' is, that it contained expressions liable to be understood in a very unsound sense, yet they say, that they still 'adhere to these ex-'pressions;' only they 'have expressed *the sense* in which 'they adhere to these expressions.' (See N. Testimony, p. 14.) Again, they scruple not to adopt the expressions in the passages of the Confession which are most obnoxious to them; but then they use them in a sense very different from, and palpably inconsistent with their meaning in the Confession of Faith. (See N. Testimony, p. 198.) Accordingly, in the passage immediately in view, the Synod say

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say 'the Testimony is to be considered as declaratory of 'the *sense* in which we adhere to them.' But this sense may be inconsistent with the sense of the Standards; of this the Synod are not careful, for they adhere to them only in so far as they are agreeable to their Testimony.

It is but an evasion to alledge, that by this the Confession, &c. are no more subjected to the Testimony, than the Scriptures are subjected to the Confession, when it is considered as declaring our sense of them. To determine this it is only necessary to apply to the scriptures some of the limiting clauses, which are applied by the Synod to the subordinate standards. How would it do to read the first question in the formula thus; 'Do you believe the Scriptures 'of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God, and 'the only rule of faith and manners,' in so far only as they agree with the Narrative and Testimony? Or even to say, 'if however there are any expressions used in these which 'may appear to some obscure or inconsistent with the fol-'lowing testimony; the Testimony is to be considered as de-'claratory of *the sense in which we adhere to them*?' Such limitations are obviously inconsistent with holding the Scriptures as the supreme standard; but they are also inconsistent with the acknowledgement of subordinate standards, *in their place*, in which respect they are supposed to be subordinated to the Scriptures *alone;* and if they are to be limited, controuled, and judged by any other deeds, henceforth they are degraded from their rank, which is assumed by those deeds to which they must bend, and according to whose language they must speak in all things.

The first Seceders were willing to submit all the subjects of difference between them and the national judicatories to be judged according to the Confession and other standards. The question may be brought to a short issue. It is simply this, *Are the Synod willing to make the same submission as to the present points of difference between them and their brethren, or are they not?* If they are not, or rather, as they cannot, consistently with their declared sentiments, it is evident that their profession is no longer what it was.

SECTION

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SECTION IV.

OF THE DIFFERENCE IN REFERENCE TO THE NARRATIVE, AND ITS SEPARATION FROM THE TESTIMONY.

HERE, as on the former branch of the subject, it may be proper to recal the attention to the nature and design of the Secession-testimony. This is requisite to understand why it turns so much upon facts, and of what importance these are in its proper structure. They are necessary not merely as evidential of the grounds which we have for bearing testmony in a state of separation, and as shewing the occasion that was given for asserting certain truths, and condemning the opposite errors; which last seems to be the principal thing the Synod have in eye when they say 'that it will be 'expected that every person who shall henceforth be admitted 'to our communion, should read the Narrative, in order to 'his having a proper understanding of the Testimony.' But the principal light in which these facts are to be considered is as forming in themselves proper matter for testimony, as being either, on the one hand, appearances of the Lord for this church and land, and attainments which are to be adhered unto and testified for in the way of grateful commemoration, or, on the other hand, defections from attainments in reformation and solemn engagements, which are to be testified against and mourned over as grounds of divine displeasure.

This design of the Testimony is explicitly declared in the very first paragraph of that deed. 'This Presbytery find 'themselves bound in duty to cast in their mite of a *Testi-* '*mony* to *the many great and wonderful appearances of the* '*Lord for this church and land;* and to the doctrine, wor- 'ship, government, and discipline of the Lord's house there- 'in, agreeable to the holy Scriptures, our Confession of 'Faith and Catechisms, the National Covenants of Scotland, 'and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations:

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'As also, against the injuries and insolent indignities done 'unto, and the encroachments, violations, and breaches made 'upon the same.—They judge a testimony of this kind 'necessary, for the information of the present generation, 'who have generally lost the knowledge both of what God 'hath done for Scotland, and of the grounds and causes of 'his righteous quarrel and controversy against us; necessary 'for the conviction and humiliation of all ranks of persons; 'necessary to preserve and maintain the truths of God, and 'an useful mean to transmit them to following generations 'in their purity *.' The presbytery justly viewed the works of God and attainments in reformation, as well as the truths contained in the word of God, as proper objects of testimony; and defections from reformation, in a course of managements both by church and state, as well as errors, they reckoned it their duty formally and explicitly to testify against and condemn. These they therefore embodied in the same deed as equally proper matters of testimony. 'The ministers associated did and hereby do, in the first 'place, acknowledge and bear record unto the wonderful 'power, grace, and goodness of God in visiting this land,' &c. And, after selecting a number of instances, both in the first and second Reformation, which deserved particularly to be remembered, they conclude thus, 'The above par-'ticulars are some instances of the power and goodness of 'the most high God, manifested in the beginning and pro-'gress of the work of Reformation in this land; which this 'Presbytery judge it their duty *to record* and *bear witness* 'unto †.' In like manner, after giving a number of instances of the shocking perjury and apostacy from this Reformation, down to the period of the Revolution, they add the following explicit testimony against them: 'Wherefore the mini-'sters associated together, being met in presbytery, judge 'it their duty to *testify against* all these heinous sins and 'abominations. And they did, and hereby do *condemn* all 'the several sins, backslidings, and steps of defection from 'our

* Display, vol. i. p. 54. † Ibid.

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'our Covenanted Reformation, above mentioned; for the 'particular reasons and grounds above condescended upon. 'And they hereby *declare*, that they *were* and *are just causes* 'of the Lord's righteous quarrel and controversy,' &c.* In a similar way do they proceed throughout the Testimony.

The Testimony now adopted by the Synod is, however, of a very different kind, and cannot, in any proper sense, answer the purpose of the former. All the matter referred to above is thrown into a separate form, under the title of 'A Narrative of the State of Religion in Britain and Ire-'land, from the period of the Reformation to the present 'time.'——This paper corresponds to its title; it is just a historical detail. No doubt it must contain, like any church-history of the period, an account of many of the wonderful works of God; and expresses often the judgment of the compilers, in the way of approbation or disapprobation. In a *loose* and *general* sense it may be called a testimony, as ecclesiastical histories may be said to contain the testimonies of their compilers. But in any *strict* or *proper* sense of the word, it cannot be so viewed. A just or adequate substitute for that part of the former Testimony which referred to the same subject, it cannot be. Not to mention here the defective and erroneous statements which are to be found in some parts of it; where is that explicit and particular testimony to the works of God and reformed attainments, which is to be seen in the former, and for the want of which the most accurate, full, and flowing narration cannot compensate? where that faithful and *pointed* testimony against, and judicial condemnation of the various steps of defection, which are 'necessary for the information of the present gene-'ration—for the conviction and humiliation of all ranks of 'persons,' and for awakening them from 'the deep security 'and general stupidity that prevails under our national sins 'and spiritual judgments,'—and which a court of Christ ought to use for gaining these ends?

* Display, vol. i. p. 84, 85.

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'What is properly called the Testimony,' is confined (with an exception or two) to the assertion of certain doctrines, and the condemnation of the opposite errors. The appropriation of this name, and the confining of the judicial form of testifying to this, the ministers who have protested against the late deeds considered as proceeding upon very defective views of the nature of the Secession-testimony, and as calculated to turn away the attention of Seceders and the public at large from one of its important branches. They had occasion repeatedly to hear it avowed by those employed in compiling the new work, that the truths of God's word, and the condemnation of opposite errors, were the only proper objects of a testimony; and they saw that it was constructed upon this principle. At an early period, some of them endeavoured, though in vain, to obtain a determination of the question, in what light the Narrative was to be viewed, and what use was to be made of it; and when the Synod, without determining this, came to a resolution respecting the enacting of 'the Testimony,' they were obliged to dissent from this resolution. After the reasons of their dissent were given in, the Synod indeed added the two last paragraphs in the Introduction, in which they went so far as to call the Narrative 'a part of the 'Synod's judicial Testimony;' and declare some kind of connection between it and 'the Testimony itself.' But a very little consideration will shew that this addition is far from being satisfactory.

For, First, to call it a part of a judicial testimony, will not alter its structure, nor make it adapted to serve this purpose. Secondly, the declarations respecting it are glaringly contradictory. Some of the friends of the new work insisted for a total separation of the two, and that the people should in no respect be required to approve of the Narrative; others of them thought that some adherence should be required. The two paragraphs are so laid that the one favours the one notion, and the other favours the other. Thus it is said 'such an adherence to the Nar-

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'rative, as includes a vouching for the truth of facts, will 'not be required *.' What adherence then will be required? 'No person will be admitted to communion with us, 'who *formally condemns* the attainments in Reformation 'which the Synod approve, or approves those steps of defec- 'tion which the Synod condemn.' And can this be called an adherence? surely not. Accordingly, it follows: 'Nor 'will any be admitted who does not *express an adherence* to 'the doctrines contained in the *Testimony itself;*' plainly intimating, that persons are required to express an adherence to what is contained in the Testimony, but not to what is contained in the Narrative.

Yet, in opposition to this, it is said in the very next paragraph, that 'the Synod, and *the people under their inspection*— 'are to be considered as bearing Testimony against every 'practical evil mentioned in the Narrative, whether it took 'place in former times, or has a present existence; and, in 'like manner, as bearing Testimony for the faithful con- 'tendings of the Lord's witnesses in behalf of his truths 'and ordinances, from the beginning of the Reformation 'hitherto.' But how can *the people under their inspection* be considered as bearing Testimony for these faithful contendings, when all that is required of them is, that they do not *formally condemn* them; or how can they be considered as bearing testimony against these practical evils, when all that is required of them is, that they do not *formally approve* of them? This species of *negative Testimony* is certainly new and anomalous. Would a person be considered as appearing as a witness in any cause, or as bearing testimony for a fact, merely if he did not appear in court and formally oppose and contradict it? Who would say so? There are multitudes in different religious communions who are not formally condemning what the Synod approve, or approving what the Synod condemn. There are many of the same stamp in connection with the Synod, who are yet indifferent about the matter, and do not wish to be troubled about

* New Test. p. 15.

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about it: for all these an open door is provided. Such ambiguity and contradiction in the very stating of terms of admission and communion, where the greatest plainness and precision are requisite, afford but a faint ground of expectation as to what remains; and indeed there is just reason for saying, that general, vague, and equivocal language prevails in all those places of the new deeds that are different from the former; although they are called a more plain statement. This of itself is just ground for rejecting them, even if there were no other reasons.

The reason assigned for 'casting the Testimony into this 'new form,' and 'separating the Narrative from the doc-'trinal Testimony,' is also inconclusive; nor is the proposed end gained. It is said, that as in the original Testimony 'the declaration of our principles is intermixed with much 'historical narration: This has given some persons occa-'sion to think, that we required every Seceder to vouch for 'the truth of all such narration; which very few could be 'in a capacity to do.' The Synod add, 'no such thing was 'ever required or expected*.'—If by 'vouching for the truth 'of facts,' be meant the producing of the documents upon which their truth rests, or being able to verify them by referring to the proper histories, then 'no such thing was 'ever required or expected.' But certainly it was required and expected that those who acceded to the Testimony were satisfied, upon good evidence (upon such evidence as is competent to them in their station, and as persons are warranted to depend upon in such matters), of the truth of the facts which entered into that testimony. A plain declaration of this kind, would have served more to 'obviate the 'mistake, than all that the Synod have done.' But let us see how the proposed end is gained. 'The *Narrative* (say 'they) being enacted by the Synod—is to be considered as '*a part of the Synod's judicial Testimony.*' So that, after all, the Synod's Testimony is still 'intermixed with much 'historical narration,'—with much historical narration additional

* New Test. p. 14.

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tional to what was contained in the former Testimony.—Further, if it be true, that 'the people under their inspection—are to be considered as bearing testimony against 'every practical evil mentioned in the *Narrative*, whether 'it took place in former times, or has a present existence,' &c. is there not as much reason given as formerly for persons to think that the Synod require 'every Seceder to vouch 'for the truth of all such narration.' Will any conscientious person, who regards the ninth commandment, bear witness against certain evils, without being persuaded, and having good reason to believe, that they are facts, lest he should be found a 'false witness for God,' and chargeable with taking up a false report against his neighbour? One thing that may convince any that it was not the intermixture of the narrative which gave occasion to the mistake referred to, is, that the objection was equally, if not principally, made against the Act for renewing our Covenants; although the Acknowledgement of sins, which contains the narration of facts, was drawn up distinctly from the Bond, but connected with it by a reduplicating clause.

It would not be difficult to shew that less occasion is given for the above objection by the former Testimony than by the new one. The compilers of the former do not pretend to give 'A Narrative of the State of Religion in Britain and Ire-'land.' Their object is to select and specify, on the one hand, the most signal instances of divine goodness and attainments in reformation which are matter of thankful commemoration and approbation, and, on the other hand, the most signal instances of defection and sinful management, which are grounds of condemnation and of the Lord's controversy; and, under every head, they sum up and express their judgment in such formal and explicit language, that "he that runs may read," and none can be at a loss as to what they testify *for* or *against*. Very different, however, is the Synod's Narrative in all these respects. Of this they seem sensible, and therefore lay down this general rule; 'the Synod's approbation or disapprobation of past or pre-

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'sent transactions, is to be *limited* and *defined* by their agree-'ment or disagreement to the doctrine contained in the 'following Testimony *.' Here is double work for the candidate for admission. He must first 'read the Narra-'tive, in order to his having a proper understanding of the 'Testimony;' and then, after having read and understood the Testimony, he must go back to the Narrative that he may know how to limit and define 'the Synod's approbation 'or disapprobation' of what is there narrated. Is this like simplification and plain statement?

Nor will it be found so easy, after all, to find out the Synod's judgment as to many things; and we are obliged indeed to *limit* by the doctrine of the Testimony the approbation or disapprobation which in the Narrative they appear to pronounce. Take an example or two. In p. 28. it is narrated, under the year 1640, that 'the King came to Scotland' and 'there 'the Parliament being convened, he gave his consent to such 'acts as *were thought necessary* for securing the civil and 'religious rights of the nation.' The acts here referred to included *the legal establishment of the Presbyterian religion,* and the ratification of what had been done by the General Assembly from the year 1638; as well as the ratification of the treaty with England, which laid the foundation for the religious uniformity between the two kingdoms. All these the Synod have huddled up in a general notice of the fact, without expressing their own judgment of the acts; merely saying, that they '*were thought* necessary.' How the doctrine contained in the Testimony *defines* the 'Synod's 'approbation or disapprobation' of this past transaction, it may be difficult to divine. Again, in p. 29, we are informed that in 1643, 'commissioners were sent by the Par-'liament of England—to acquaint the Scots, that the people 'of that country were resolved on an ecclesiastical as well as 'civil reformation; and desired the assistance of some of the 'ministers of the church of Scotland in that work.—For this 'purpose the Solemn League and Covenant of the three na-'tions

* New Test. p. 15.

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'tions was framed by the friends of reformation.' That the ecclesiastical reformation was carried on in England under the direction of the parliament; that the Solemn League was framed jointly by the commissioners of that parliament and those of the Scotish *Convention of Estates*, along with commissioners from the two assemblies; that it was approved, ratified, and appointed to be sworn, by the parliaments as well as ecclesiastical assemblies of the different kingdoms, are certain facts, and facts which, after all the glosses and vails attempted to be thrown over them, enter deeply into the reformation of that period, and into the testimony borne to it in the Secession. It would appear, on a general reading, that the Synod mention the above fact with approbation; but their approbation must be *limited* and *defined* by the doctrine contained in the Testimony. And what judgment shall we form of these transactions from the chapters on *Covenanting*, and on *the difference between Church and State*? According to the principles there advanced, what had the parliament to do with *ecclesiastical* reformation? What had they to do to send *commissioners* on such an errand, as to procure ministers from the church of Scotland to assist in that work? What had they to do to frame a Solemn League and Covenant? Accordingly, although the Synod were obliged to mention the fact in their narrative, yet they slide immediately into indefinite language, saying, that it was desired by the Scots and by the English, and that it 'was framed by the friends of reformation;' although all the world knows that the framing of the Solemn League was no deed of any number of private individuals, but the act of the *civil* and *ecclesiastical authorities* in Scotland, and of the parliament of England, with the concurrence of the assembly of divines called together by them to give advice in ecclesiastical matters.

Nor is there less difficulty in ascertaining the Synod's judgment as to what is condemned in the Narrative. For example, it is mentioned apparently as one of Mr Glass's errors, that 'he denied that National Covenanting is a duty

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'under the New Testament,' p. 84. Yet in the New Testimony we are taught that 'religious covenanting is *entirely* an *ecclesiastical* duty;' that 'those invested with civil 'power have no other concern with it than as church-members;' and that it is incumbent upon men solely 'in their spiritual character—as members of the church of Christ, and 'not in their civil character, as members of the state,' p. 154, 155, 162. Did Mr Glass deny this*? It is with greater consistency that the Synod have expunged in their new *acknowledgement of sins*, the clause in the former, in which it was mentioned, with reference to the same period, as matter of lamentation, that 'some who formerly distinguished themselves 'in zeal for our reformation and covenanted principles have 'turned aside to *sectarian* extremes;' † as it is undoubted that this referred unto the loose opinions respecting toleration, and

* When errors are revived it is commonly with some new modifications, which they take from the peculiar sentiments of their patrons, although they are essentially the same with what formerly raged; and it is not difficult for persons to avail themselves of these modifications when they do not wish to claim kindred with those who formerly held the same opinions. To those who are acquainted with the controversy respecting National Covenanting managed between Mr Glass and the judicatories of the National Church, there cannot remain a doubt that it was essentially the same controversy which the Protesting Brethren have been engaged in with the Synod. Mr Glass's objections to National Covenanting did not originate from Independent notions as to the constitution of particular churches (although they led to these, as they have generally done), but they arose from his views as to the difference between the church under the Old and the New Testament, the spirituality of the kingdom of Christ and its disconnection from worldly kingdoms. "My "kingdom is not of this world," was the text which he considered as decisive upon this subject. He tells us in *his Narrative*, when he attained these views, 'then I had done with National Covenanting under the New Testament, '*according to all the views that they who are truly zealous for our National Cove-* '*nants*, have had of that Covenanting," p. 6. 18. He continually objects to National Covenants, not because a number of Congregations joined in them, but because they mixed church and state together, invested magistrates with power about religious matters, and because the nation was considered as covenanting in its national and political capacity. After removing certain senses which do not enter into the controversy between him and his opponents, he thus describes the Covenanting he opposes. 'Taking a *nation* in the most 'proper sense, as such a politic body, with all its policy, power and government, 'ranks and orders of men in it, and representatives—And I reckon you will not 'find it easy to reconcile a Nation in this sense, its entering into a church-cove-'nant, with our Lord's good confession before Pilate concerning his kingdom; 'nor with the notion the New Testament gives us of a Christian church.' *Narrative of the Controversy about the National Covenants*, p. 106.

† Display, vol. i. p. 239.

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and liberty of conscience, with the consequent denial of the magistrate's power about religion, national churches and national covenants, to which extremes the Synod themselves have now turned aside.—Another instance of the ambiguity of the Narrative, and the impossibility of knowing the Synod's judgment in the way of condemnation may be seen in p. 93. There a number of oaths are mentioned, which are said to be 'either sinful in themselves or rendered so 'by the too frequent and unnecessary repetition of them.' But the Synod do not point out which of these oaths are sinful in themselves, and which are sinful only from the circumstance of too frequent repetition; although the knowledge of this is absolutely necessary to direct the consciences of their people in this. For instance, as to the first oath mentioned, 'the Oath of Allegiance;' Is it sinful in itself? If so, then it cannot be sworn even once. Or is it sinful only on account of its too frequent and unnecessary repetition? Then it may be sworn once at least, without sin. But where do the Synod give any information as to this? As they acknowledge that 'the great 'and dreadful name of the Lord our God is mournfully 'profaned' by such oaths, and the land filled 'with the 'dreadful guilt of perjury,' it was certainly a high duty for them to "give a certain sound" on this head. To "wrap it "up" in this general and ambiguous way may serve the purposes of carnal prudence and peace; but there is reason to fear that it will add to, instead of checking the guilt of false swearing. Was this the manner in which our fathers laid open the sins and snares of the times?

From the above statement, it appears that, by the new form into which the Synod have cast their testimony, they have completely changed its nature, and lost sight of its original design. They have thrown out from 'what is pro-'perly called the Testimony,' that which constituted its most proper and important part. The sentiment which has given rise to this change is not new. It was advanced long ago by the Burgher brethren, who, in their writings re-

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presented the historical matter as of inferior importance, and pleaded, that the assertion of truths and condemnation of errors was the principal and proper part of the testimony, to which accessions were given. Let us hear their own words: 'It must be evident (say they) to an impartial 'reader whose mind is not warped by prejudice, or under 'the influence of faction; that the most important branch of 'the testimony is that in which *the truths of God* are so-'lemnly asserted, and the contrary *errors* expressly con-'demned. It is *properly* in respect to *this*, that Seceders 'declare their united confession of the truth in our adopted 'standards of doctrine, worship, government and discipline; 'in opposition to the repeated departures from this system, 'with which the great body of the nation is chargeable 'before God*.' This is the very principle upon which the Synod have now acted in the formation of their new Testimony, and the manner in which accessions are to be given to it. However popular this sentiment is now become, it was formerly considered both as false, and eversive of the proper state of the Secession-testimony. A distinguished advocate of that Testimony has exposed its fallacy. He represents it as limiting the accessions to the testimony to what 'is but about a *seventh* part of the whole.' 'As to 'the said part being the most important branch of the testi-'mony (says he), nobody is so far warped with prejudice 'or under the influence of faction, as to make a question of 'it, if this only mean that the *truths of God* are of much 'greater importance than the *evils of men!* But the whole 'warrant which the Associate Presbytery had for *making*, 'and which people had for *acceding* to the said *assertion* 'of the truths of God in a way of *Secession*, depended upon the 'truth and importance of the *historical* and *condemnatory* 'part of the Testimony.' And after illustrating this he concludes: 'It is therefore most evident that the *historical* 'and *condemnatory* part is the most important branch of 'the testimony, even the very *fundamental* part of it, consi-'dered

* Preface to the "Re-exhibition of the Testimony," p. xiv.

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dered as a testimony in a state of *Secession* from the established Church *."

It will be no answer to this reasoning to say that the new Testimony not only asserts the truths of the word of God, but condemns the contrary errors; for the Burgher brethren allowed both of these, and yet were chargeable with excluding the *historical* and *condemnatory* parts from the principal matter. And the reason is plain. The things condemned are *abstract* errors, as opposed to the particular truths asserted; they are not condemned as *evils* existing, as errors charged on particular persons or churches, as was explicitely done in the original Testimony. In this view, 'the Testimony itself' adopted by the Synod, is not, in the appropriate sense in which the word has been used among us, a testimony, any more than a system of Divinity is, which not only asserts truths, but also condemns the opposite errors †.

Upon the whole, the Synod's Narrative is no adequate, or proper substitute for that part of the judicial Testimony which refers to the same matter. It is totally divested of its form; it wants its plainness, decision, and consistency and, as we shall see immediately, it wants an important part of its matter. It is constructed upon different principles; and there is not wanting ground for fearing that the changes already introduced are only a prelude and preparation for greater. Principles will find their level at last. The principle that the testimony of the church should be stated directly from the word of God, naturally leads to, and must, if

* Mr Gib's Account of the Re-exhibition, p. 22.

† In the foregoing reasoning, when we speak of a Testimony, the word is used in the peculiar and appropriated meaning in which it has always been understood among us, as applied to this subject. Any reasoning which may proceed upon a more general sense of the word is therefore inapplicable to the controversy. Neither is it of any avail to tell us of this or the other church, whose testimony had no intermixture of historical matter. For we do not plead for this form as essential, or necessary in every period or place; but only as proper and necessary in the circumstances of the Secession-body, as maintaining a Testimony in behalf of a religious profession and reformation which was formerly attained, and to which all ranks of persons in the land had become solemnly bound, but from which the great body have apostatised. If this is kept out of view, endless declamation may be substituted for argument.

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if followed out, issue in the excision of the Narrative, as tending to embarrass the profession; and the separate state in which it now stands, will render the rescissory act, or more probably the practical neglect of it, very easy. The substitution of the Testimony for the Confession of Faith may also be viewed as a native consequence. Indeed, every body must see that at present the profession of the Synod is embarrassed and confused. If persons must read the Confession and other standards of the church of Scotland, being told that they contain erroneous doctrine, they must proceed with diffidence and fear. Afterwards they must compare them with the Synod's Testimony, to know how far they do receive them. As the Synod receive the standards of the church of Scotland 'in so far only,' and adhere to them 'in a sense' of their own, would it not be better to have standards of their own entirely new, and with a few additions to their Testimony, to make it what it was called in its Overture-state, 'A Confession and Testimony?' This would at least be, as the French term it, *errer avec justesse, to err consistently.*

When the question of procedure in covenanting was lately under consideration in the Synod, different ministers signified it as their opinion and desire, that 'the acknowledgment 'of sins' should be laid aside, as it not only perplexed the covenanters, but could not be vindicated from the objections against set forms of prayer; and that an extempore prayer should be substituted in its room. On the evening previous to the late covenanting in Edinburgh, a paper was given in to the Synod from a Session, making the same request, with additional objections. This petition, it is believed, still lies on the table, the petitioners being desired to wait until a more convenient and proper season. Is it forgotten that about 40 years ago, when two ministers of the Secession gave in to a presbytery a paper of scruples as to proceeding in covenanting, on account of the complex nature of the acknowledgment of sins, its approbation of the magistrate's power about religion, and National Covenanting, that they were

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were, upon refusing to take it back, *suspended* from the ministry, and, for persisting in the support of these opinions, one of them was *deposed? But the times are changed, and we are changed with them.* After the Synod have adopted the leading principles, for the maintenance of which these ministers were censured, and when they have abundant evidence that the body is fast leavening with the remainder, they have presumed to pervert the discipline of the house of God, by turning its edge against those who were endeavouring to abide by and support the original testimony and principles; while persons of opposite principles are screened and caressed.

SECTION V.

OF THE DIFFERENCE WITH RESPECT TO THE NATIONAL REFORMATION, AND DEFECTION FROM IT.

FOR the clearer understanding of the testimony borne in the Secession to the Reformation formerly attained in these lands, it may be proper to attend to the following remarks.

1. The Secession-testimony was not confined to the approbation of a certain system of doctrine, religious worship, and church-government, contained in certain standard-books; it included also a course of acts and measures, pursued in adopting and securing these. This is necessarily implied in the very idea of a *Reformation.* A reformation is the removal of abuses and corruptions which adhered or had crept into a society, with the enactment and substitution of salutary laws and regulations in their room. Accordingly, in the original Testimony, besides the approbation of the standards, the great leading acts and measures which were pursued in the settlement of religion are also approved; and this constituted it properly a testimony for the Reformation. This is often overlooked in reasonings and declamations on this subject. Although the Synod, in their Introduction, mention

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mention several acts and proceedings of the Reformers which they approve, yet they appear to fall into the vague and improper use of the word *Reformation*. For, after stating an exception against their 'giving the formal sanction of 'civil authority' to their religious profession (which formerly was considered by Presbyterians as an important part of Scotland's reformation), they add, 'It is not however to 'the imperfect managements of men that we declare our ad-'herence; but to *the Reformation itself*,' N. Test. p. 10. see also p. 31.

2. In the Secession-testimony this Reformation is considered as public and national; as carried on, advanced, and settled, by the civil and ecclesiastic powers, acting in their proper place, but in the way of co-operation in the same great cause. It never entered into the minds of its compilers that religion and reformation belonged only to the church and ecclesiastical courts, and that a nation and its rulers were not to interfere in its promotion. On the contrary, they viewed the reformation and public settlement of religion, as a great national concern, in which the commonwealth as well as the church was deeply interested; and which all ranks of men were bound in their several stations to advance. Accordingly they approve and commemorate the public measures and laws of the state for advancing and settling the Presbyterian religion, as well as those of the church *.——And in the Declaration and Defence of their principles respecting civil government, they distinguish the *Reformation* into two parts, the *civil* reformation and the *ecclesiastical* reformation; and they declare that they have a call to 'bear witness more especially 'unto

* 'The profession of Religion adopted by Seceders is the doctrine, worship, 'discipline and government received and approved by the Assemblies of this 'church in her reforming periods, as founded upon the word of God, sworn to 'in our covenants, *ratified and established by our reforming parliaments*.' Campbell's (of Ceres) Vindication of the Judicial Testimony, p. 62.

'The Parliament not only withdrew all legal encouragement from preced-'ing corruptions and impositions, but gave *positive countenance and support to the* 'church in carrying on the work of God. And in this respect we bear witness 'to the *State* as well as the *Church* Reformation of that period.' Morison's Present Duty, p. 371.

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'unto our ancient *civil* reformation;' and to do so 'by op-'posing our ancient civil reformation to our present civil 'deformation *.'

3. Connected with the above, the covenants of this land were viewed and approved in the Secession-testimony as public national oaths and covenants, by which church and state become bound to promote and preserve the Reformation, and to stand by and support one another in this work.

But the Synod, in their Narrative and Testimony, confine themselves almost entirely to the *ecclesiastical* reformation. They approve of the abolition by the state of laws made in favour of a false religion, but do not approve of their making laws in favour of the true.—Accordingly, in the Narrative they pass over all those laudable acts ratifying the reformed Presbyterian religion and the Covenants, which were formerly witnessed for as eminent parts of reformation, and instances of the singular favour of God in that work. As was said in a paper given in to the Synod, 'all the laudable acts and constitutions of civil rulers, from 'the first Reforming Parliament of Scotland down to the 'Revolution, are either consigned to oblivion, or warily de-'nied their former and due praise: thus the one half of 'our Reformation, and of what was the nation's glory, is 'cut off.' But that we may see how far the national state of religion, and the actings of the civil powers respecting it, enter into the matter and substance of the Secession testimony, it may be proper to be a little more particular.

In the *first* Testimony (commonly called the *extra-judicial*, but which was afterwards approved by the Associate Presbytery) it is mentioned, 'so powerful and prevalent 'was the light of the gospel, that about the year 205 the 'king and many peers of the land embraced Christianity; and 'in a short time thereafter, the *whole nation* became *Chris-'tian*, p. 29. 30.' In the *Judicial Testimony*, it is recorded and commemorated, as one of the instances of that 'great

* Display, vol. i. p. 278. 280.

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'work' which 'the hand of the Lord' did 'effectuate' at the æra of the Reformation, that in the year 1560 not only 'the Pope's authority was abolished in Scotland,' but 'the 'first *Confession of Faith* was *ratified* and *approven* by the 'Parliament;' also that 'the *first book of Discipline* was *ap*-'*proven* by the Privy Council of Scotland.' The true Protestant religion now assumed the form of the national religion, and a national profession was made of it, which was afterwards solemnly confirmed by the National Covenant*. After the *Second book of Discipline*, wherein the form of government and discipline of the house of God is more distinctly laid down, was approved and registrated by the General Assembly;—'all the pieces of Reformation then attained unto 'were *ratified and approven* by the *Parliament* anno 1592. 'In grateful acknowledgement of which *rare and singular* 'mercies, and for their own *mutual strength and support* 'against the common enemy, the *National Covenant* having 'been first subscribed by the king and his household, was 'subscribed by persons of all ranks anno 1581, and again 'by all ranks of persons in the year 1590.—By this so-'lemn Oath and Covenant, this kingdom made a *national* 'surrender of themselves to the Lord; and bound and oblig-'ed both themselves and their posterity,' &c †.

In bearing witness to the second reformation, after mentioning what was done by the General Assembly 1638, it is added, 'through the good hand of the Lord upon his ser-'vants and people, the Reformation then begun and carried 'on,

* The Confession of Faith, after it was ratified, was published, with the following Address, '*The Estates* of Scotland with the Inhabitants of the same, '*professing Christ Jesus* his holy evangel; unto their natural countrymen and 'unto all other realmes and nations, professing the same Lord, &c.' In the *National Covenant* the Religion sworn to is described as that which is 'received, 'believed, and professed by many and sundry notable *churches* and *realmes*, but 'chiefly by *the church of Scotland, the King's majesty, and three Estates of this* '*Realm*, as God's eternal truth—more particularly expressed in the Confession 'of our Faith, established and confirmed by sundry Acts of Parliaments, and 'now of a long time openly professed by the king's majesty and whole body 'of this realm, both in burgh and land.' See also Wilson's Defence, p. 37.

† Display, vol. i. p. 55, 56.

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'on, was *ratified* and *confirmed* by the second parliament of 'king Charles I. *anno* 1640; the last session of which Par-'liament was countenanced by the king's presence. And 'from this time the building of the house of God went on 'prosperously and successfully *." Among other instances of this prosperous and successful advancement of the work, which 'deserve particularly to be remembered,' the Testimony condescends upon the following: 'During this period, 'the Estates of the nation gave their helping-hand to the 'work of reformation; not only by the *legal establishment* 'given unto it in the foresaid year 1640, but also by ap-'proving the Solemn League and Covenant *anno* 1644, and 'by many other laudable Acts of Parliament passed *anno* '1649,' several of which are specified with approbation, particularly the act as to the Coronation-oath which provided, *inter alia*, that before the admission of the king to the exercise of his office he should, 'for himself and his succes-'sors, consent and agree to acts of Parliament enjoining the 'Solemn League and Covenant, and fully establishing the 'Presbyterian government, &c. as they are approven by 'the General Assembly of this kirk, and Parliament of this 'kingdom.—The above particulars (it is added) are some 'instances of the power and goodness of the most high God, 'manifested in the beginning and progress of the work of 'reformation in this land; which this Presbytery judge it 'their duty to *record* and *bear witness* unto †.'

In *the Declaration and Defence*, or *Answers to Mr Nairn*, the same testimony is borne to the civil part of the Reformation, with references unto the *Judicial Testimony* for a more particular statement ‡. The Presbytery not only declare in general, that it is 'peculiarly incumbent upon every 'civil state whereinto Christianity is introduced, to study and 'bring to pass, that civil government among them, in all the 'appurtenances of its constitution and administration, run 'in agreeableness to the *word* of *God*, be subservient unto

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* Display, vol. i. p. 58. † Ibid. p. 61, 62.
‡ Ibid. p. 278, 284, 288

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'the spiritual kingdom of *Jesus Christ*, and to the interests 'of the true religion and reformation of the church;'—and that 'the people considered in their conjunct and *politic* 'capacity (as thus only this matter is competent unto them) 'should, by their deed of civil constitution provide, that 'their magistrates be obliged to concur in the same true 'religion and reformation, and to rule them by laws no 'way prejudicial, but serviceable thereunto.' But they also apply this doctrine particularly to the Reformation of Scotland, and approve of the settlement of the constitution in Reforming periods. 'Agreeably unto all this (say they) the 'Deed of Civil Constitution was settled upon a reformed 'footing, by Act VIII. Parl. 1. James VI.;' and speaking of the second Reformation in Scotland they say, 'beside 'many laudable acts in the civil administration, the Deed 'of Civil Constitution was farther reformed than ever be-'fore by Act XV. of the second Session of Parliament, '*anno* 1649. And according unto this settlement was King 'Charles II. crowned at Scoon, January 1st, 1651.' Again, 'the Presbytery acknowledge that the profession, defence, 'and maintenance of the true religion in doctrine, worship, 'discipline, and Presbyterial Church Government, agreeable 'unto and founded upon the word of God,—was secured by 'the fundamental constitution of the civil government in 'our reforming periods; which *deed* of civil constitution, 'in all moral respects is *morally unalterable*; because of its 'agreeableness to the divine will revealed in the word, and 'because it was attained to and fixed in pursuance of our 'Solemn Covenants *.'

As the Secession-testimony approved of the civil part of the Reformation, so it condemned the conduct of the nation and the civil powers in departing from and abolishing this. In general this is viewed and condemned as a course of *national apostacy and perjury*, in the overthrow of public laws, and the violation of solemn oaths and covenants, by which the *whole land* was bound †. 'A glorious building was

* Display, vol. i. p. 274. † Ibid p. 63. 70, 80, 84, 227, 228, 279, 284.

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'was pulled down: a reformation ratified, confirmed, and 'established, in the strongest terms, by law, and fenced by 'the most solemn oaths and covenants, sworn with uplifted 'hand by our king, our noblemen, &c. was not only sul-'lied, but overturned.' More particularly, they bear witness against the removal of the *Act of Classes*, anno 1651, by which the nation delivered up 'not only their valuable 'civil liberties,' but also 'all the civil securities and ratifi-'cations given unto the work of reformation—into the hands 'of—notorious enemies of a Covenanted Reformation.' Also the *infamous Act Rescissory*, anno 1661, which did re-'move all the legal securities given to our church constitu-'tion and the whole work of reformation—all the legal 'fences from our church constitution.' While the Associate Presbytery judged it their duty to commemorate with thankfulness the Divine power and goodness manifested to this nation at the Revolution*, and durst not dissemble or lightly esteem 'what security is given by the present government 'unto our *religion*, lives, and liberties, such as no other 'people now on earth enjoys the like†;' yet they condescended upon sinful managements and defects in the constitution of the civil government, and settlement of religion at that period. Particularly, they lamented it as a sin, that in settling Presbyterian government, the parliament 1690, 'overlooked and passed by all the legal securities given to 'this church in that covenanting period from 1638 to 1650,' and that the infamous Act Rescissory, whereby all the acts and deeds of the foresaid period were declared null and void, was never repealed‡. 'The body politic (say the Answers 'to Mr Nairn), particularly in Scotland, have never, by 'their deed of civil constitution, provided that their magi-'strates be brought under, and admitted upon obligations and 'terms, such as were fixed upon and established in reform-'ing periods (particularly in the coronation-oath *annis* 1567 'and 1649); but such as are in many respects, not only 'different

* Display, vol. i. p. 85. † Ibid p. 284-5. with Mr Gib's Note.
‡ Ibid. p. 86. 230.

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'different from, but destructive of the same,—to the great 'prejudice of real religion, and reformation in the house of 'God. On all these accounts, great guilt and wrath is still 'lying and increasing upon the body politic*.' In the original Testimony, the Revolution-parliament is also blamed for not establishing presbytery as agreeable to the word of God and our covenants, nor abolishing prelacy as inconsistent with these, in their settlement of church-government.—'Prelacy is never considered *as contrary to the word of God*, 'and abjured *by our covenants*; nor our Presbyterian church 'government, as what the land is bound and obliged to main-'tain by the most solemn oaths and covenants †.'

From these instances it appears, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the Secession-testimony embraced and witnessed for the Reformation of these lands as properly *national*; and explicitly approved of the public laws establishing the true reformed and Presbyterian religion, particularly between 1638 and 1649, and not only condemned the act abolishing these laws, 'because it was stated in direct opposition 'to the work of Reformation, and introduced the course of 'apostacy that followed,' but also condemned the Revolution-parliament for not restoring the authority of these parliaments, and reviving or applying their acts, as the circumstances and necessities of the time did require or admit. The testimony with respect to these laws, does not lie in a few incidental expressions, which may be cut off without injuring the remainder. But, as the civil and ecclesiastical proceedings, the laws of church and state, were intimately and necessarily connected in the public reformation of the land, so they are interwoven with and run through the whole of that testimony by which this was adopted and approved. The principle which calls in question the propriety of a national establishment of religion, and the duty and warrantableness of civil rulers employing their authority in promoting religious reformation, is totally incompatible with the Secession-testimony; and necessarily leads to

* Display, vol. i. p. 286. † Ibid. p. 87.

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to a quite different mode of reformation and settling the affairs of a nation.

Accordingly the Synod, having adopted this principle, have in their new deeds dropped and relinquished their testimony in behalf of this important part of the Reformation. This appears from the Narrative both of the first and second period of reformation. In the first, the Synod mention the conduct of the parliament of Scotland in abolishing the laws in favour of Popery, but they do not record nor approve, nay, they do not even so much as mention their acts ratifying the Protestant Confession of Faith and Discipline. Even the act of Parliament *anno* 1592, long the charter of the liberties of the church of Scotland, by which all the pieces of reformation then attained were ratified, is consigned to oblivion. Under the second period, they do not approve of the legal establishment of the Presbyterian religion *anno* 1640, and have expunged the express testimony formerly borne to the laudable co-operation of the Estates of the Nation, ('inspired with a noble and predominant 'zeal for the house of God') with the ecclesiastical rulers, and to the laws publicly ratifying the covenants and work of reformation between 1638 and 1649. They no longer testify for the reformed settlements of the civil constitution in the years 1567 and 1649; although these were formerly declared to have been agreeable to the word of God, fixed in consequence of solemn covenant engagements, and therefore morally unalterable. That these are not unintentional omissions, but proceed from principle and design, we are not left to doubt; for the Synod expressly declare in their Introduction: 'We do *not vindicate* their embodying the matter of 'their religious profession with the laws of the country, 'and giving it the *formal sanction* of *civil authority*.' p. 10. They do not vindicate what in the former Testimony was applauded, and declared worthy of perpetual remembrance; they do not vindicate those laws, the abolition of which was formerly declared to be an instance of the most daring perjury, and a standing ground of divine controversy.

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We may here put the question; the conduct of this nation and its rulers in recognising, ratifying, and establishing the true Protestant and Presbyterian religion, was it of God or of man? was it a laudable act and reformed attainment, or an imperfect and sinful measure? This is a question which no Seceder, in particular, can evade. It is beyond a doubt that this was expressly acknowleged in the Secession-testimony as a laudable and important attainment, acquired by the special favour of God, to be gratefully recorded and perpetuated. It is to be lamented that Seceders should now be in such a state, that they are either unable or afraid to answer this question; as the Jewish teachers were as to the question respecting John's baptism. The Synod profess that they do not condemn civil establishments of religion. But it cannot be denied that these were formerly approved and expressly witnessed for in the Secession-testimony and public papers. This approbation the Synod have expressly relinquished; the testimony in their favour they have dropped. Now what is it that will warrant any church to relinquish or drop any article from her Confession or Testimony, but its being found and proved to be false and erroneous? What else will release her from her engagements, and from the command of her Head, "that which ye have already, "hold fast till I come." To be consistent with themselves, they must take this for granted, though they do not formally express it. Let us hear their own general doctrine. 'The 'truths of Christ being committed to her as a precious trust, 'it is undoubtedly her duty to keep them carefully. She 'is commanded to *hold fast what she hath*, and to *contend* '*earnestly for the faith*. When any truth which the church 'exhibits in her Confession is opposed, she ought to stand 'forth in its defence.—If the judicatories of the church re-'fuse to appear in defence of any article which is attacked; 'although it be defended by individuals, who thus discover 'their regard for the truth, there is no evidence that she 'is unwilling to part with it*.' The application is plain. The

* Narrative and Testimony, p. 3, 5.

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The article in question belonged to their Confession; it is not only generally opposed in the present time, but has been contradicted from pulpit and press by those of their own communion; they have refused to stand forth in its defence: therefore, themselves being judges, *there is no evidence that they are unwilling to part with it.* There is, indeed, much to the contrary; for, as we shall afterwards see, while they in some places affect to leave the matter undetermined, they in other places advance doctrine totally eversive of it.

While the Synod say that they do not vindicate the reformers in this part of their conduct; viewing things through a false medium, and according to their notions of the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, they have been left to bring general and suppositious, but heavy charges against them *, charges from which, when brought forward by malignant and sectarian enemies of the Reformation, or by those who had made defection from it, they were formerly vindicated by Seceders. These charges fall not only upon the Reformers, but upon all those who have approved of their conduct; particularly in the Secession. While bringing such charges against the reformers and reformation, it is no wonder that the Synod have also found it necessary to blame the original Testimony, and fix a stigma upon it as containing expressions favouring 'an improper connection between 'church and state,' and 'compulsory measures in support of 'the true, or for the suppression of false religions;' p. 14, 49. without doing it the common justice of specifying the exceptionable expressions, or the improper connection or compulsory measures which it is said too much to favour.—Considering that the members of Synod themselves, until of

* Narr. and Test. p. 31. 159, 219. The reader may compare the charges brought by the Synod in the above passages against the proceedings of the Reformers, with the following extract from *the Burgher Re-exhibition*, 'The building 'of the house of God in manifold instances advanced prosperously and successfully: Though it must be acknowledged that the enforcing of religious duties 'with civil penalties, and in too many instances blending the affairs of Church 'and state with one another, is totally inconsistent with the spiritual nature of 'Christ's kingdom.' *The Re-exhibition* of the Testimony, p. 90. 91.

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late, *solemnly* and *expressly* approved of the public laws and proceedings witnessed for in the Judicial Testimony without any avowed reserve, a very liberal acknowledgment of their own errors would seem to be due, and might have been expected.

It thus appears that the Synod have set aside and relinquished a great part of the testimony hitherto borne by Seceders to the Reformation of this land. Where is the consistency of representing that they only except 'some expressions' in it, when they have cut off entire paragraphs, and one whole branch of that testimony? The unfaithfulness of dropping and burying this is very great; for it was not the work of man, but of the Lord, who stirred up and blessed the instruments employed in it. On this account, instead of "shewing to the generation to come the praises "of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that "he hath done," he has this charge to bring, "they remem-"bered not the multitude of his mercies—they forgat his "works, and his wonders that he had shewed them."

In vain do we look into the new Deeds for a faithful and full testimony against the national guilt, in apostatising from and overthrowing the Reformation attained. It must be evident to any reflecting mind, that those who do not vindicate, or whose principles lead them to condemn the national laws and constitutions, fixing and establishing the Reformed religion, can with little consistency and force oppose and condemn the abrogation of these. They must pass over, throw into shade, speak dubiously, or with reserves which weaken all that they say. The first of the public evils testified against and condemned in the former Testimony and Acknowledgement of Sins was *the Public Resolutions, anno* 1651, by which 'the nation (with the consent of 'the church) delivered up not only the maintenance and 'preservation of their valuable civil liberties, but also of 'all the civil securities and ratifications given unto the 'work of reformation from the year 1638 into the hands of 'those who had appeared for the support of arbitrary power

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'and authority in the state, and who were notour enemies 'of a covenanted reformation *.' These *resolutions* are indeed mentioned in the Narrative with disapprobation; but they are not condemned as sinful in themselves, nor as a violation of the solemn engagements in the late renovation of the Solemn League *anno* 1648, as was done in the former testimony. And in the new *Acknowledgment of Sins*, the confession of them as a national sin is *altogether expunged*; although this occupied the first place in the former *Acknowledgment*, and was justly considered as opening the flood-gates to the subsequent course of apostacy. In the account of the proceedings at the Restoration of Charles II. both in the *Narrative* and in *Acknowledgment of Sins*, no notice is taken of the infamous *Act Rescissory*, which annulled and buried all the reforming parliaments, with all the legal securities given to the Presbyterian religion during the preceding period of reformation. This 'crowning part of the 'nation's infamy and guilt, and under which it lies to this day, 'is thought unworthy of being expressly mentioned either 'in the *Narrative* or *Testimony*, and when it is once mentioned in the *Acknowledgement of Sins*, not in its most proper place, a fallacious deception is employed in a foot-note †, 'to prevent any from thinking that these buried parliaments 'and acts, in so far as they gave any ratification or establishment to the Presbyterian religion are approved of, or that 'they were unjustly annulled ‡.' Indeed, as has justly been remarked, the New Testimony enacted by the Synod, may

* Display, vol. i. p. 65.

† Narr. and Test. p. 226.

‡ It is scarcely possible to conceive on what grounds the Synod, after expunging the condemnation of the *Act Rescissory* in their account of the period when it was passed should have retained it here. Did they think the Revolution-parliament more guilty than that at the Restoration? It might have been expected that they would have pointed out how the Revolution-parliament could have abrogated that Act, without reviving the Acts Rescinded, which the Synod is not to be considered as approving. Would they have had the Parliament to have made an Act Rescissory of their own, agreeable to the principles of the Synod? Or, is this article of charge against that Parliament retained with a view of preserving an old argument against their Burgher brethren; even after the Synod have found and adopted a principle which renders all recourse to any particular settlement of religion unnecessary, in condemning the religious clause of some burgess-oaths?

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be viewed as an *Act Rescissory*, in the *ecclesiastical* sense, annulling, setting aside, and burying all the public laws which have been made in support of religion in this land since the period of the Reformation; and the principle upon which it proceeds calls in question, and condemns all the laws which have been passed for ratifying and establishing the Christian religion, or any particular profession of it, in any period or part of the world.

Were we here to enter upon the vindication of the public acts and constitutions made in favour of religion in Scotland, and approved of in the Secession, it would not be difficult to shew that they were consonant with the principles of reason, Christianity, the Reformation, and sound policy; that laws similar to the greater part of them have been adopted in every reformed state, and almost in every civilized country, and that others, which might be peculiar, were rendered necessary and strongly called for by the singular circumstances in which our ancestors were placed, the dangers to which they were exposed, and the enemies with whom they had to conflict (circumstances which are either not sufficiently known or not adverted to by many who condemn or awkwardly apologize for them); that they were necessary for securing to themselves and their posterity distinguished religious privileges, which every people ought to preserve and cherish in preference to all other blessings; that so far from confounding and blending together civil and ecclesiastical matters, or ascribing to civil rulers a power to model the latter at their pleasure, one design of many of these laws was to provide against such encroachments, and legally to recognize those marches which had been set between the two jurisdictions; and that, so far from proceeding from ignorance of the spirituality of the kingdom of Christ, they were framed by the advice and authority of men who understood this as well as any in modern times can decently pretend to; although they did not adopt the extravagant notions, that this kingdom could not maintain a friendly alliance with the kingdoms of this world, was incapable

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capable of receiving benefit or support from them, or stood in no need of securities from them for the legal enjoyment of her external privileges.—But such a vindication would lead into a field of investigation too extensive for the present undertaking; nor is it requisite in answer to charges so general, vague, and unsupported. Any thing of this kind that may be necessary at present will fall in under the following branch of the subject.

SECTION VI.

ON THE DIFFERENCE AS TO THE EXERCISE OF CIVIL AUTHORITY WITH REFERENCE TO RELIGION; AND THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE.

THAT civil and religious society, and, where revelation is enjoyed, church and state, with their respective authorities, are distinct and mutually independent, in their proper line and employment, will readily be granted by all who have just notions of the subject. But societies and powers which are distinct and independent, may have common objects about which they are employed, and may act in these with harmony and co-operation. Religion is an object of common interest to mankind, and as it enters into, and deeply affects the various relations in which they stand connected with one another, becomes an object of attention and care to all. Magistrates, Ministers, Masters and Parents have all a distinct and peculiar concern with it; and the authority of each may be employed about it, without encroaching on the business, or usurping the powers of the others. Inattention to this general view of religion, and the connection which it necessarily has with the various relations of life, lies at the foundation of many of the modern errors which prevail on this subject.

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That more special concern which certain persons have with religion, particularly in consequence of their being placed, according to divine institution, in offices properly religious and ecclesiastical, in which the immediate administration of religious ordinances is committed unto them, and unto which they are to 'give themselves wholly,'— does not set aside the more general concern which other persons have with it as connected with their office and station, and those powers and duties which are founded in nature and more clearly unfolded by revelation. When masters and parents employ their authority for promoting religion, they do not interfere with the office of ministers of the gospel, nor does their power thereby become ecclesiastical, but still remains herile and parental. In like manner, when civil rulers employ their authority for the same purpose, they do not encroach upon the proper business of church courts; their power remains civil and political, and does not become ecclesiastical or spiritual, although it be exercised about objects religious and ecclesiastical. To set aside or deny the powers belonging unto any of these, because we may not be able exactly to define their limits, or because they may interfere with, and encroach upon one another (which, in real life, and among erring and corrupt men, may be expected), would be unreasonable and absurd. In large and extensive societies, in particular, which are co-ordinate, such as a kingdom, and a church of equal or nearly equal extent, and consisting chiefly of the same individuals, there must be more danger of such interferences, with the jealousies consequent upon them; yet as these do not arise from any formal or particular alliance, but from circumstances resulting from their co-existence and actings, so far from being an objection against every connection and alliance, they, on the contrary, demonstrate the propriety of agreeing to and establishing such rules as may bid fairest for preventing these evils, and for conducting matters so as that both societies may gain their ends more fully to their mutual benefit.

The brethren who protested against the late deeds of Synod

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nod, have had no difference with them as to the necessary distinction between church and state, or the independence of the former upon the latter in all her intrinsic jurisdiction and administrations. This has been an eminent part of the testimony and contendings of the church of Scotland, and to it they cordially adhere, in opposition to all Erastian tenets, and the sinful encroachments of civil powers, which have long prevailed, and do still continue to prevail in some protestant countries. To the general propositions of the Synod on this head, in their late Testimonies, (chap. 23. of that which was enacted in 1801, and ch. 24. of the one enacted in 1804), they do not object, in as far as they state the common doctrine respecting the essential distinction between church and state, and their mutual independence; although they consider many of their explications and inferences as false and misapplied. That Christ is the sole Head of the church; that he has an exclusive right to appoint all her laws and ordinances of worship and service; that all administration in his house are to be performed in his name and by his authority, and that his servants, in the proper line of their office, do not act by the authority of, or by delegation from any earthly prince or legislature, so as to receive and execute their mandates, or be responsible to them for their ministrations;—are precious articles of testimony which these brethren hold as dear as any in the Synod, and which, it is hoped, they shall not be left to relinquish or forget. To charge them with making the civil magistrate the Head of the church; investing him with an ecclesiastical power and supremacy over her, or ascribing to him a lordship over the faith and consciences of men, they regard as the language of ignorance, gross inattention, or perverse misrepresentation.

But, in full consistency with these principles, they think they can maintain, that civil authority may be lawfully and beneficially employed in the advancement of religion and the kingdom of Christ. The care of religion, in the general view of it (in which respect the consideration of it is previous

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vious to that of the form which it assumes in consequence of supernatural revelation and the erection of a church state), belongs to the magistrate's office; and it is his duty to watch over its external interests, and to exert himself in his station to preserve upon the minds of his subjects an impression of its obligations and sanctions, and to suppress irreligion, impiety, profanity, and blasphemy. It is also the duty of civil rulers, and must be their interest, to exert themselves to introduce the gospel into their dominions when it may be but partially enjoyed; and by salutary laws and encouragements to provide them with the means of instruction, and a settled dispensation of ordinances; especially in poor and desolate, or in ignorant and irreligious parts of the country;—all which they may do without propagating Christianity by the sword, or forcing a profession of religion on their subjects by penal laws. When religion has become corrupt, after it has been received and established in a nation, and has degenerated into a system of falsehood, superstition, idolatry, and tyranny, carried on by churchmen, aided by the civil powers; and where various abuses of this kind are interwoven with the civil constitution and administration,—an eminent exercise of civil authority is requisite for the reformation of these; not by the abolition of all laws respecting religion, as a matter which civil government has no concern with, and by leaving every thing to individual exertion or voluntary associations, which would only breed anarchy and endless disorder; but by magistrates taking an active part in prosecuting a public reformation, removing external hindrances, correcting public and established abuses, allowing, and in some cases calling together and supporting ecclesiastical assemblies for settling the internal affairs of the church and of religion, "that unity and "peace may be preserved, &c.;" as was done by the rulers of different countries at the period of the Reformation from Popery, and in Britain at the time of the Westminster Assembly. In an ordinary state of matters, they also judge, that it is the duty of civil rulers to maintain and support the

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the interests of religion, and the kingdom of Christ, by publicly recognising and countenancing its institutions, giving the legal sanction to a public profession, or confession of its faith, a particular form of worship and ecclesiastical discipline, which are ratified as national; and by making public and permanent provision for the religious instruction of their subjects, and the maintenance of divine ordinances among them. These, with other things of a similar kind agreeable to the principles of presbyterians, civil rulers may do in the exercise of their authority, without encroaching upon the office or business of the church and its office-bearers, without compelling their subjects to believe or practise what they do not believe or judge sinful, and without punishing persons who may conscientiously dissent from the authorised and established religion, or depriving them of their natural rights merely on this ground; while at the same time, by using their authority in this way, magistrates do act for the honour of him by whom they rule, for the promotion of religion, the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and the public good of their subjects.

When these things are considered, it will appear, that many of those propositions which are usually brought forward to set aside the exercise of magistratical authority about religion are impertinent and inconclusive, being founded upon a mistake of the principles upon which it proceeds, and a confounding of things totally distinct. We may also see, that several of the assertions of the Synod, in illustration of their propositions, are so general and vague that they can give no satisfaction to those who seek for distinct ideas upon the subject. It is true, as asserted by them, that 'the 'Christian religion—annexes no new powers to any office 'or relation founded in nature;' but it is also true, that it does more than 'lay every one who professes it, under the 'strongest obligations to the faithful discharge of the duties 'of his station *.' It gives new and higher qualifications to them for the discharge of duties, and also presents new objects

* N. Test. p. 194.

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about which they are to be employed. The Christian religion does not properly add any new powers to masters, parents, husbands; but it not only lays them under stronger obligations to the discharge of their respective duties, and give them greater fitness for this, it also widens the sphere of their operation, and brings new objects within their reach. It is the same as to magistrates. The Synod say, 'Christian magistrates have no power to give laws to 'the church.' But, without doing this they can make laws, in that civil society of which they are the organs, for the good of the church, and the advancement of the interests of religion. The Synod say further; 'they have no power to prescribe 'a confession of faith, or form of worship to the church, or 'their subjects in general.' But may not ecclesiatical as well as civil rulers be guilty, by assuming the power of *prescribing* a confession of faith and form of worship? The original and proper appointment of articles of faith and the mode of worship belongs to Christ, and he hath *prescribed* these in his word. But if, by prescribing, be meant recognizing and setting forward these, then this may be competent to both, when they act in subordination to the divine authority, and in their direct line and order. When the body of a nation are agreed in the profession of the true religion, and a particular confession of faith, form of worship, &c. have been drawn from the scriptures by those to whom this work immediately belongs, the adding of the civil sanction to them (though this does not give them any spiritual authority, nor make them more binding as ecclesiastical deeds), and their being thus considered as national, may be justified as lawful, expedient, and, in many cases, highly necessary. Nor does this ascribe to magistrates any juridical powers incompatible with the nature of their office, or which encroach upon the province of ecclesiastical courts.

The testimony now adopted by the Synod is not only very defective, as it does not contain or exhibit any principles upon which the civil reformation in this land, formerly witnessed

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witnessed for, can be vindicated; but it also advances doctrine eversive of this, and directly opposite to that which is contained in the word of God, in the standards of the church of Scotland, and in the public papers of the Secession, respecting the authority and duty of civil rulers.—It denies that the authority of magistrates extends to religion or matters ecclesiastical, limiting its exercise to the civil or secular concerns of mankind. 'The power (say 'the Synod) competent to worldly kingdoms is wholly tem-'poral, respecting *only* the *secular* interests of society *.' This is still more apparent from the 6th section of the same chapter, in which they profess to state the duty of civil magistrates with respect to the church and the interests of religion. The whole of what is said to be incumbent upon them in their *official* character is contained in one sentence, and is confined to *protection*, and the securing of an universal liberty of worship. 'It is their duty, in their *official* 'character, to protect her (the church) in the peaceable pos-'session of her rights as a society, and to secure all her 'members the full enjoyment of liberty of conscience, so 'long as they act as peaceable members of the civil state †.' This protection, it is evident, is no more than what the Synod must consider as due to every society calling itself a church, however heretical and corrupt, yea, to every society erected for the most common purposes; and the securing of liberty of conscience, of which they speak, cannot be confined to those who are members of the Church of Christ; for the Synod had before declared, that 'a liberty of worshipping 'God in the way which they judge agreeable to his will, 'is a right *common* to *all men* ‡;' and this must be the right which magistrates are to secure. So that, in their *official* character, according to the Synod's doctrine, magistrates are to do no more for a true church than a false, and no more for Christians, than for Jews, Deists, Mahometans, or Pagans. All that follows, after the sentence above quoted, to the end of the section, it is carefully to be observed, respects

 magistrates

* Nar. and Test. p. 193. † Ibid. p. 197. ‡ Ibid. p. 195.

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magistrates solely in their *private* character. For it is immediately added; 'But there are many other things incumbent 'upon the magistrate in his *private* character, for the glory 'of Him by whom kings reign, and for the prosperity of his 'interest in the world.' He is 'as well' as 'all other men 'to acquaint himself with the divine word,' &c. It is his duty, like every 'subject of God's government,' to use his 'own advice and example' for promoting and preserving religious worship. And like other church members, he is to contribute 'according to his ability,' for the spread of the gospel, and the support of a gospel ministry;' only it is allowed that his *private* purse is heavier than that of other church members, and that his advice and example may have more influence. And this is all that is specially allotted and allowed to magistrates in the word of God! all that is meant in such passages of scripture as Isa. xlix. 23. Psalm lxxii. 10. to which the Synod refer at the foot of the page!! This is all the sense and meaning in which the Synod adhere to the passages of the Confession, which teach the duty of civil rulers as to religion.

The reference to the Confession of Faith, and the use of its words, with the explication and limitation added, deserve particular notice. The following are the Synod's words, and the manner in which they are printed: 'It is his duty 'as a subject of God's government, in obedience to the se-'cond commandment, *to use his endeavours that the truth of 'God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and here-'sies be suppressed; that all corruptions in the worship of 'God and discipline of the church be prevented or reformed; 'and that all the ordinances of God be duly administered 'and observed.* The endeavours for accomplishing these ends, 'must all be such as are consistent with the spirit of the 'gospel, not by the interposition of the civil sword, but 'by his own advice and example *.' The things about which it is here said the magistrate must use his endeavours, include the whole of the public worship and ordinances of God,

* Nar. and Test. p. 198.'

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God, whether *natural* or *revealed*, *moral* as well as *positive*. This is evident from their being arranged under the second commandment of the moral law, said to be the duty of the magistrate as a subject of God's government, and from the particulars enumerated. What then are the endeavours which the magistrate is to use, what are the means which he is to employ for gaining these ends or any of them? That they 'must all be such as are consistent with the 'spirit of the gospel,' none will doubt, as all that the magistrate does ought to be so. But the Synod add, 'not by 'the interposition of the civil sword, but by *his own advice* 'and example.' Although it is not improbable that the phrase 'the civil sword' is here introduced *in terrorem*, yet as contrasted with 'advice and example,' it must refer to the *authority* of the magistrate in general; as the expression 'the sword' is used by divines, agreeably to scripture, to express civil authority, in like manner as 'the keys' is used as the denomination of that authority which is ecclesiastical *. Accordingly, the Synod exclude all exercise of civil authority about divine worship and ordinances, confining him to the use of 'advice and example' in suppressing all blasphemies and errors, preventing or reforming all corruptions and abuses in worship or discipline, and in taking order to have all the ordinances of God administered and observed.—The abuse which is committed upon the Confession of Faith is not less glaring, than the departure from its doctrine. The evident tendency of condescending upon these particulars, of using the words of the Confession, and of fixing the readers attention upon them by printing them in Italics, is to make him believe that the Synod is still adhering to the doctrine of that book upon the article in question. Yet there cannot be a more glaring contradiction of the doctrine laid down in that part of the Confession of Faith than what is taught by the Synod. For the limited sense imposed upon the words is not only what the compilers of the

* 'The civil power is called the power of *the sword*, and the other (the ecclesiastical) the power of *the keys*.' Second Book of Discipline, chap. i.

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the Confession would have rejected, but it is a sense which it was the express design of that paragraph to condemn. This must be apparent to any one who will take the trouble to examine it as it stands in Conf. Chap. XXIII. sect. 3. The design of that section is to explain the power and authority of the civil magistrate respecting religion. In the first part of it they mention some things to which his authority does not extend; they then go on in the latter part to state some things to which his authority reaches, in opposition to those who denied the magistrate's power about religion; and they say, 'yet he hath *authority*, and it is his 'duty to take order that unity and peace be preserved in 'the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, 'that all blasphemies,' &c. But the Synod cut off the words *he hath authority*, which give meaning to all that follows, and teach that he hath *no* authority in those matters, but is limited to the use of 'his own advice and ex-'ample.' After having thus excluded all exercise of civil authority from the settlement of religious worship and ordinances, after having restricted magistrates 'from dispos-'ing of the nation's property—for the spread of the gospel, 'and the support of a gospel-ministry;' it is surely a farce, it is something worse than a farce, to pretend that the Synod do not enter into the question respecting the lawfulness or unlawfulness of civil establishments of religion.

Let us now contrast these sentiments of the Synod, with the doctrine maintained on this head by the Protestant and Reformed churches. These harmoniously agree in declaring, as with one mouth, that civil authority is not limited to the secular affairs of men, and that the public care and advancement of religion is a principal part of the official duty of magistrates. A few extracts from their public Confessions will clearly establish this. The *first* Confession of *Helvetia*, or *Switzerland*, says, 'Seeing that every 'magistrate is of God, his *chief* duty (except it please him 'to exercise tyranny) consisteth in this, to defend religion 'from all blasphemy, to promote it, and, as the prophet 'teacheth

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'teacheth out of the word of the Lord, to see it put in prac-
'tice, as far as lies in him. In this matter the first place
'is given to the pure and free preaching of the word of God,
'the instructing of the youth of citizens, right and dili-
'gent teaching in schools, lawful discipline, a liberal pro-
'vision for the ministers of the church, and an attentive
'care of the poor.'——The *latter* Confession of Helvetia (which was expressly approved by the church of Scotland and most of the reformed churches), teaches, that 'magis-
'tracy, of whatsoever sort it be, is ordained of God him-
'self, for the peace and tranquillity of mankind; so that
'the magistracy ought to have the chief place in the world.
'If he be an adversary to the church, he may greatly hin-
'der and disturb it; but if he be a friend and member of
'the church, he is a most profitable member, and may ex-
'cellently aid and advance it. His principal duty is to pro-
'cure and maintain peace and public tranquillity; which,
'doubtless, he will never do more happily than when he is
'seasoned with the fear of God and true religion, particu-
'larly when he shall, after the example of the most holy
'kings and princes of the people of the Lord, advance the
'preaching of the truth, and the pure unadulterated faith,
'shall extirpate falsehood and all superstition, impiety, and
'idolatry, and shall defend the church of God. For, indeed,
'we teach that the care of religion doth *chiefly* appertain to
'the holy magistrate.'

The Confession of *Bohemia*, called also the Confession of the *Waldenses*, says, 'The Christian magistrate ought also to
'be a partaker, and, as it were, a minister of the power of the
'Lamb, Jesus Christ, whom God hath, in our nature, made
'Lord and King of kings, that kings of the earth, who in
'times past had been heathen, might come under the power
'of the Lamb, give their glory unto the church, and become
'nurses of it, which began to be fulfilled when they receiv-
'ed the Christian religion. The Christian magistrate is
'peculiarly taught, by this *authority* of his, to promote the
'truth of the holy gospel, &c. Whereunto the second
'Psalm

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'Psalm doth exhort magistrates: *And now, ye kings, under-*
'*stand,*' &c. The Confession of *Saxony* declares, that 'the
'word of God doth, in general, teach this concerning the
'power of the magistrate; First, that God wills that the
'magistrate, without all doubt, should sound forth the voice
'of the moral law among men, according to the ten com-
'mandments, or law natural, by laws forbidding idolatry
'and blasphemies, as well as murders, theft, &c. For well
'has it been said of old, *The magistrate is a keeper of the*
'*law,* i. e. of the first and second table, as concerning dis-
'cipline and good order.—This ought to be their special
'care (of kingdoms and their rulers), to hear and embrace
'the true doctrine of the Son of God, and to cherish the
'churches, according to Psal. ii. and xxiv. and Isaiah xlix.
'*And kings and queens shall be thy nurses,* i. e. let common-
'wealths be nurses of the church, let them give entertain-
'ment to the church, and to godly studies.' The *Dutch*
Confession (approved also by the French church) teaches,
'that it is the duty of magistrates not only to be careful to
'preserve the civil government, but also to endeavour that
'the ministry be preserved, that all idolatry and counterfeit
'worship be abolished, the kingdom of antichrist brought
'down, and that the kingdom of Christ be enlarged: In
'fine, that it is their duty to bring it to pass that the holy
'word of the gospel be preached every where, that all men
'may serve God purely and freely, according to the pre-
'scribed will of his word.' And the *French* Confession de-
clares, that God hath 'delivered the sword into the magis-
'trate's hand, that so sins committed against both tables of
'God's law, not only against the second but the first also,
'may be suppressed.'

In the Confession of the *English Congregation in Geneva* (which was approved and used in Scotland before the establishment of the Reformation here), it is said, 'Besides
'this ecclesiastical discipline, I acknowledge to belong to
'this church a politic magistrate, who ministereth to every
'man justice, defending the good and punishing the evil.

'To

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'To whom we must render honour and obedience in all 'things which are not contrary to the word of God. And 'as Moses, Ezechias, Josias, and other godly rulers, purged 'the church of God from superstition and idolatry, so the 'defence of Christ's church appertaineth to the Christian 'magistrates, against all idolaters and heretics, as Papists, 'Anabaptists, with such like limmes of Antichrist.' The *Scots* Confession says, 'Moreover, to kings, princes, rulers, 'and magistrates, we affirm, that *chiefly* and *most princi-* '*pally* the conservation and purgation of the religion doth 'appertain; so that not only they are appointed for civil 'policy, but also for maintainance of the true religion, and 'for suppressing of idolatry and superstition whatsoever, 'as in David, Josaphat, Ezekias, Josias, and others, highly 'commended for their zeal in that case, may be espied.'— The *Second Book of Discipline* declares that, 'Although all 'the members of the kirk be holden every one in their vo- 'cation, and according thereto, to advance the kingdom of 'Jesus Christ, so far as lieth in their power, yet *chiefly* 'Christian princes, and other magistrates, are holden to do 'the same. For they are called in the scriptures nourishers 'of the kirk, for so much as by them it is, or at least ought 'to be maintained, fostered, upholden, and defended against 'all that would procure the hurt thereof. So it pertains to 'the office of a Christian magistrate,— to make laws and con- 'stitutions agreeable to God's word, for advancement of 'the kirk, and policy thereof, without usurping any thing 'that pertains not to the civil sword, but belongs to the 'offices that are merely ecclesiastical, as is the ministry of 'the word and sacraments, using of ecclesiastical discipline, 'and the spiritual execution thereof, or any part of the 'power of the spiritual keys, which our Master gave to the 'apostles, and their true successors.'

The *Westminster* Confession teaches, that Christian magistrates, 'in the managing' of their office, 'ought especially 'to maintain *piety*, justice, and peace;' that 'the civil ma- 'gistrate may not assume to himself the administration of

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'the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the 'kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his 'duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in 'the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, 'that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed; all cor-'ruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or 'reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, ad-'ministered, and observed. For the better effecting where-'of he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and 'to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be accord-'ing to the mind of God.' The *Larger Catechism* teaches, that 'the charge of keeping the Sabbath is more especially 'directed to governors of families and other superiors, be-'cause they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but 'to see that it be observed by all those that are under their 'charge;' also, that in the second petition we pray, among other blessings connected with the advancement of Christ's kingdom, that 'the church' may be 'furnished with all 'gospel-officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, '*countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate.*'

Such is the harmony of doctrine in the Protestant churches on this head, expressed in their Confessions and public formularies drawn from the word of God; a harmony which deserves great attention, and from which none should rashly depart *. From this doctrine there was no deviation in the original Testimony and public papers of the Secession. In adopting the Confession of Faith and other standards of the church of Scotland no exception was ever stated on this subject. This appears from the *second* and *third* questions in the old formula, and from the I. II. and VI. articles of the assertory part of the Testimony, concerning worship, government,

* 'That harmony is beautiful which we may observe amongst the several 'Confessions of the Reformed Churches, and an evidence that there was a 'special presence of God with them, and also of a plentiful effusion of the holy 'Spirit upon them; it is likewise a hopeful presage, that when the Lord turns 'again the captivity of Zion, and when his holy arm shall give the blow unto 'the throne of the beast, the several churches and their watchmen shall see 'eye to eye, and with the voice together they shall sing.' Wilson's Defence, page 37.

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vernment, and discipline *. On the contrary, the *whole doctrine* contained in the Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism, as received by the Church of Scotland, is expressly approved and homologated. In *the Declaration* and *Defence* of the Associate Presbytery's principles respecting *the present Civil Government*, or *Answers to Mr Nairn*, after laying down the principles upon which the magistrate's power is founded and can be defended, it is added, 'there is 'nothing especially allotted and allowed unto magistrates, 'by the word of God and the *Confessions of the Reformed* 'Churches, but what can be so' argued for and defended †.

If we have recourse to the writings of those who were concerned in the compilation of the public papers of the Secession, or who have vindicated them, we will find that they maintain the common Presbyterian doctrine respecting the magistrate's power about religion, and condemn the opposite doctrine as a hurtful error. Mr *William Wilson*, of Perth, in his *Defence*, pronounces 'the legal or civil esta-'blishment' enjoyed by the church of Scotland, 'good in 'itself,' although it was at that time abused by the judicatories. 'We will readily agree (says he) that the coun-'tenance of civil authority is not necessary to the being of 'the church, though it is *very profitable* and *useful* to her 'outward peaceable being: As also, that the countenance 'and protection of the civil magistrate, given unto the judi-'catories of the church, in the faithful discharge of their 'duty, is a great outward blessing, promised unto her in 'New Testament times, Isa. xlix. 23. and lx. 5, 10. Rev. 'xvii. 16 ‡.' Having mentioned a number of the 'peculiar 'and distinguishing principles' of the Anabaptists and Brownists, among which is the following, 'they affirmed, that the 'Christian magistrate had no right to meddle at all with 'any matters of religion; and they pled for an universal 'toleration, under the specious pretence of liberty of con-'science:' Mr Wilson adds, 'Against the above *extrava-*

* Display, vol. i. p. 157, 161. † Ibid. p. 311.
‡ Defence, p. 417, 530. comp. 167.

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'*gant* principles our reformed divines employed their pens, 'and discovered the contrariety of them to the holy scrip-'tures, and their affinity to several of the gross principles 'of the ancient Donatists and Novatians. The above are 'the principles that the most part of our divines, cited by 'the author of the Essay, do reason against; and *the prin-'ciples of the Seceding ministers are as far distant from them 'as east from west* *.' Again, 'The greatest deceits have 'been brought into the world under the name or notion of 'new lights. It is to be regretted (continues he) that such 'new lights have of late appeared in our horizon, who plead 'against the establishment of confessions of faith, &c. *by 'the laws of the land:* If our author had employed his pen 'against *such new lights*, providing he had done it to pur-'pose, he had thereby done more service to our Reformation 'rights and our Presbyterian interest than he has done by 'his *Essay on Separation* †.' His antagonist, Mr Currie, having charged Seceders with one of the principles held by one Roger Williams, Mr Wilson answers; 'But, how 'comes our author to conceal his other principle mentioned 'by Mr Mather in the place quoted by him, viz. *His violent 'urging, that the civil magistrate might not punish breaches 'of the first table in the laws of the ten commandments?* Our 'author has, no doubt, his reasons for not mentioning this '*Sectarian principle*, mentioned by Mr Williams; however, 'according to Mr Mather, in his history, the above princi-'ples bred as much disturbance in New England as that 'which our author mentions ‡.'

Mr *Alexander Moncrieff*, of Abernethy, inculcates the same doctrine in his writings. 'Christian magistrates (says 'he), in their characters, are to maintain and defend the 'faith in Christ. We do not mean that they are to propa-'gate the religion of Jesus by sword, fire, and faggot, but 'that Christian states are to employ their *power* and *autho-'rity* for support of the *worship* and *service of God*, as well 'as for regulating our behaviour to our fellow-creatures.—'Both

* Defence, p. 189, 190. † Ibid. p. 196. ‡ Ibid. p. 201, 202.

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'Both precepts and examples under the Old Testament are 'strong and clear to this purpose; and these were *not tempo-* 'rary laws, but founded upon perpetual and *moral grounds*, 'such as the peace of societies; the good of mens souls; the 'duty of all dependent beings to pay homage to their Crea- 'tor, in the manner himself has prescribed; and the duty 'of all magistrates, the ministers and delegates of the great 'God, to vindicate and maintain his honour among men.— 'No doubt magistrates have mistaken error for truth, and 'made a bad use of their power upon many occasions; but 'if the *abuse* of a power take away the *lawful use* of it, man- 'kind will be in a strange and unheard-of situation*!' The same learned and pious author, in another part of his works, gives a very perspicuous and succinct statement of the difference between civil and ecclesiastical authority, and of the power which Presbyterians allow to magistrates respecting synods and matters ecclesiastical, in opposition both to *Erastian* and *Sectarian* extremes †. With this doctrine his son, Mr *William Moncrieff* of Alloa, agrees; 'It has been proved '(says he) by such divines as have wrote against the Eras- 'tians—that, though the Christian magistrate has a power 'circa sacra (about holy things); yet he has no power *in* 'sacris (in holy things); that it belongs to the church 'in her judicatures to judge of religious matters; and the 'magistrate is to strengthen the church's hands by giving 'the civil sanction (so far as proper) to their determina- 'tions ‡.'

Mr *William Campbell* of Ceres, after quoting chap. xxiii. §. 3. of the Confession of Faith, adds the following explication: 'From this quotation of our Confession, we may no- 'tice what power the magistrate hath about the church, 'both negatively and positively. (1.) Negatively, he hath 'not a power in sacred things, viz. the power of dispensing 'the word and sacraments, nor the keys of the kingdom of 'heaven. (2.) Positively, he hath a power about sacred 'things;

* Moncrieff's Practical Works, vol. i. p. 27, 28.
† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 91—93.
‡ Observations on an Essay on National Covenanting, p. 2, 3.

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'things; he is to be nursing father to the church, to use 'that power given him of God in her defence; nevertheless 'he is not to use this power of himself, but that he may 'employ it for the good of the church, he is to call her ju-'dicatories that they may go about their work, at which he 'may be present; and so his proper work is to ratify, by 'civil sanction, what they determine and conclude*.' Mr *David Wilson* of London says, 'It is not strange that those 'who are of opinion that there can be no such thing as a na-'tional church under the New Testament, should deny the 'warrantableness of national covenanting; but if the rulers, 'or representatives of any nation or kingdom, with the con-'currence of the greater part of the people, shall embrace 'the Christian faith, authorize the profession of the true 'religion, and agree to promote the same to the utmost of 'their power, subordinating all their civil and secular inte-'rests to the glory of God, may not this be called a Nation-'al Church? And can it be said that it is unwarrantable 'for any nation to do so, or that such a thing can never be 'expected to take place under the Christian dispensation? 'If this were true, I do not see how the following prophe-'cies could ever have an accomplishment; Isa. lv. 5. Jer. 'iv. 2. Rev. xi. 15†.' 'Open breaches of the law of God '(says the same author), when they are not punished by 'magistrates and men in authority, but are either patroniz-'ed and encouraged, or tolerated and connived at by them, 'become national sins; and it is just that God should pu-'nish them by national judgments. The open violation of 'the law of God shews a *daring* contempt of his authority, 'and when no proper check is given to it by rulers and ma-'gistrates, the guilt of it is imputable to them. The guilt 'of sins committed by a people is chargeable upon rulers 'and magistrates—when they do not take care to have the 'people subject to their authority instructed in the princi-'ples

* Campbell's Vindication of the Judicial Testimony, p. 43. See also p. 44—47.

† A Modest Apology for the Conduct of Seceders, p. 41.

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'ples of religion, that they may know what is sin, and what 'is duty, the danger of committing the former, and the 'many advantages that attend, and follow upon a conscien-'tious performance of the latter *.'

Mr *Adam Gib* of Edinburgh, in his *Examination of a late Survey*, vindicates the Confession of Faith, Chap. XXIII. § 3. As to the charge of *Erastianism* brought against it by the Surveyor, he says, 'he might as well have charged' it 'with *Mahometanism*;' and his allegation that it is inconsistent with itself, he asserts, 'he will never be able' to prove †. 'For clearing the principles of the Associate Sy-'nod, and of all the reformed churches, with regard to *civil* '*establishments* of religion,' Mr Gib lays down a number of propositions, in which he guards, on the one hand, the natural rights of men, and the independence of the church, in respect of all her peculiar and intrinsic concerns, and on the other, the propriety of an established profession of religion, with public provision for the officers and ordinances of the church. 'Is there no difference (says he) betwixt these 'two; an establishing a national profession of religion, and 'a compelling all the subjects to embrace it by the terror 'of civil penalties?—The establishment now spoken of is to 'be considered as a bestowing of additional privileges upon 'some; not as a detracting from the natural and common pri-'vileges of any.—And though the bestowing of temporal en-'couragements or advantages upon the church, has been car-'ried too far—unto a corrupting of her officers and ordinan-'ces; yet this *says nothing* against such a measure thereof, 'as is truly serviceable to the interests of religion: While 'the *civil power* can also refuse or withdraw these, as they ap-'pear undeserved; without any encroachment on their natu-'ral privileges ‡.'—'The wicked import and effect of this new 'scheme is—to be considered. And, 1. It means an abolishing 'of all scripture-*precepts*, *promises*, and *prophecies*, about the 'state

* Wilson's Discourses on National Calamities procured by National Sins, p. 41, 43, 44.

† Display, vol. ii. p. 336, 401.

‡ Ibid. Append. iii. p. 403, 406, 407.

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'state of the gospel-church with regard to civil powers. 'For, according to this scheme, *kings are* not *to be wise* 'now, nor are the *judges of the earth* to be *instructed*, that 'they should serve the Lord, the King upon the holy hill 'of Zion !—No *kings*, in their *kingly* state, should *fall down* 'before him ; no *nations*, in their *national* state, should *serve* 'him ! It is to be of no consequence to the church, that the 'Lord hath said, *Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their* 'queens thy nursing mothers ; nor is it to be admitted of, *ac-* 'cording to any intelligible use of the words, that *the king-* 'doms of this world should become the kingdoms of our Lord 'and his Christ ! 2. This new scheme is for abolishing all 'obligation upon Christians to manage their secular callings 'and advantages in a way of homage to the Lord Christ.— 'Whatever opportunity and *power* any Christian man has, 'from his civil station—for favouring or promoting the in- 'terests of Christ in the gospel-church, so as may be still 'agreeable to her nature, he should reckon it his *chief* bu- 'siness thus to improve the same, in opposition to a *heathen-* 'ish way of managing the concerns of that station ; and this 'must be principally incumbent on civil rulers, from the 'principal measure of their opportunity and *power*. To 'imagine that civil rulers, professing religion, should not 'use their *power* and influence in behalf of the religion which 'they profess—or that they can otherwise put a due value 'upon it, and be truly in earnest about it, this is one of the 'Surveyor's chimerical notions—which never can be, nor 'ought to be exemplified in the world * !'

'Some people (says Mr *Morison* of Norham) may per- 'haps be shocked at hearing of a *legal establishment* of re- 'ligion, as if it were an *antichristian abomination*. But 'there is *no manner* of *ground* for the heinous charge, pro- 'vided always the establishment be not formed on the anti- 'christian plan. Nor are we to be presently alarmed, as if 'all that must needs be antichristian, which is boldly op- 'posed under that odious character. It is no unusual thing 'for

* Display, vol. ii. Append. iii. p. 495-6.

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'for *Satan to transform himself into an angel of light*; and 'under the covert of appearing to condemn a thing, to seek 'to establish it *in another shape* *'. Considering the Christian Magistrate *as a Magistrate*, the same author asserts, that 'there is no doubt, but particularly in this capacity 'it is incumbent on him to do whatever is here (i. e. in 'the Confession, Chap. XXIII. § 3.) said to be his duty 'to do.' And among other things, 'it is competent to, and 'consequently incumbent on the magistrate, to provide the 'church in an honourable patrimony, and to protect her in 'the possession and enjoyment of it, against all invaders 'whatsoever, for the support of schools and colleges, in 'order to the training up of young men for the work of the 'ministry, and for the maintenance of those who are employed in the ministry of the church.—It is further competent to, and consequently incumbent on the magistrate, 'to see and provide that his subjects be not left destitute of 'a faithful gospel ministry.—That the time shall come when 'the kings of the earth shall thus honour the Lord Christ, 'is secured to the church by manifold promises, See Psal. 'lxxii. 10, 11; Isa. xlix. 23; Rev. xi. 15 †.'

Such is the doctrine which *was* taught in the Secession, both in public acts and private writings, in conformity to, and vindication of the principles contained in the word of God, and the Confessions of the Reformed churches. And it is easy to see that they must have maintained such sentiments, to be consistent with their subscriptions and the Testimony to which they avowed an adherence. If it were not to avoid tediousness, we might have contrasted these, with the sentiments advanced of late by Seceders in different publications, in which the doctrine of the Confession on this head is yielded up as unjustifiable, and condemned; the civil establishment of any particular profession of religion is represented as incompatible with the genius and constitution of

 the

* The Secession-Testimony abundantly consistent with Liberty of Conscience, *apud* Present Duty, p. 368.

† Present Duty, p. 351. 373, 375. 377.

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the Christian church, and Antichristian *; the divine promises and providence about the church are urged as superseding all necessity of human securities †; the conduct of the church, in seeking to be secured in her collective capacity by the sanction of human laws, is compared to the sin of the people of Israel in desiring a king, that they might be like the rest of the nations; religious tests in general, as qualifying men for civil offices, are condemned, as evidently inconsistent with the natural rights of men ‡; and the abolition of the public funds for supporting religion is recommended §. These are sentiments which are now not only current among Seceders, and avowed in private writings, but introduced, in all their leading articles, into the new deeds of Synod.

Some may be ready to inquire here, how the Synod can pretend that they are still of the same profession, or deny the change of principle which is so obvious. Upon what principle do they attempt to vindicate themselves in this? In general, they have done so by taking shelter under some *general* principle or expressions contained in the former standards and public papers, and alleging that they approved of and agreed to other things in them, only in so far as they were consistent with these. Nothing, however, can be more untenable and dangerous than such a mode of defence. It contradicts every rule of just reasoning and interpretation, as to the declarations both of God and of men. Certainly, *general* declarations are to be explained and limited by those which are *particular* and more *specific;* and not the latter by the former. If an opposite practice is adopted, the writings of no man, or body of men, can ever be understood as expressing any definite set of principles, nor can they be free from perversion. This would overturn all use of tests of orthodoxy. A person has only to lay hold of some general declaration or expression, and explaining it in his own way, and drawing inferences from it directly contradictory to those

* Graham's Review of Ecclesiastical Establishments, Chap. iv. Sect. 1.

† Young's Sermons, Vol. iii. p. 179, 181.

‡ Jamieson's Use of Sacred History, vol. i. p. 316. and his Alarm to Britain, p. 89, 188, 194. § Overture by Mr James Robertson, p. 94.

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those allowed in the public standard, to say, that he agrees to all other things in that standard, only in as far as they are consistent with this; that is, only in as far as they are consistent with his private construction of it. There are certain general propositions in which Socinians and Arminians may agree with the Orthodox, while, in the sense which they affix to them, and the inferences which they draw from them, they essentially differ. Take for an example the 5th question in the Shorter Catechism: *Are there more Gods than one?* A. *There is but one only, the living and true God.* To this the Socinian assents; but could he conscientiously and honestly approve of and adopt the Shorter Catechism, with this salvo, that he understood other parts of it in consistency with this fundamental principle? Or, if he should revise and throw into a new mould this Catechism, expunging the 6th question, with every thing that implied the doctrine of the Trinity, could he defend himself, by saying that he had advanced no new principle, no principle that was not taught in some part of that book, and that he had only rendered it more consistent with itself? The answer would be easy, that it was only his private construction of that question, in direct opposition to the meaning of the compilers, as appears from what they immediately add. Another example may be taken from the first question in the formula: *Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners?* The opposers of subordinate standards and tests of orthodoxy agree with the affirmative of this, and they think that it completely sets aside all use of any other standard or rule. What then? This is only their particular construction of the question; that the compilers of the formula thought otherwise is plain, because, in the following question, they proceed to put a subordinate test to the candidate, to try his orthodoxy by a subordinate rule. They think there is a glaring inconsistency here; the compilers certainly saw none: and we do not allow that there is any. The same reasoning is applicable to those passages in the Confession,

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and other public papers, under which the Synod attempt to screen themselves; as will appear from a very little attention to them.

One passage to which they refer is Conf. Chap. xx. § 2. 'God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free 'from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are 'in any thing contrary to his word, or, beside it, in matters 'of faith or worship; so that to believe such doctrine, or 'obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true 'liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicite faith, 'and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty 'of conscience, and reason also.' From this the Synod infer that civil authority is wholly inapplicable to matters of religion. Nothing, however, can be farther from the design of the Confession than to countenance this notion, which they expressly guard against in the following paragraph; in which they state, that 'the *powers* which God 'hath ordained, and the *liberty* which Christ hath purchased, 'are not intended to destroy, but mutually to uphold one 'another;' that 'they who, upon pretence of Christian li-'berty, oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of 'it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance 'of God.' And that there is a lawful exercise of civil power about religious matters, they declare, both in that passage, and in Chap. xxiii. But further, as it was not the design of the Confession, in the above quotation, to condemn this exercise of civil authority, so no such doctrine can justly be inferred from the words. For,

1. If they condemn all exercise of civil authority, then they condemn also all exercise of every other species of human authority about these things, whether ecclesiastical, parental, &c. Is it not equally true, that God hath left the conscience 'free from the doctrines and commandments 'of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word, or 'beside it, in matters of faith or worship,' whether these be the doctrines and commandments of ministers or magistrates, of masters or parents? Is not 'an implicit faith, or

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'an absolute and blind obedience,' unreasonable and sinful, whether it be yielded to synods or parliaments? The design of the words is, to teach the subordination of all human power to the sovereignty and laws of God, particularly in matters of faith and worship. Nay, they seem in that passage to be more immediately levelled against invasions by church-authority, which have been fully as frequent and pernicious in religion as those of civil rulers; such as the assumed lordship of popes, councils, prelates, and convocations, in devising new articles of faith, decreeing and imposing unscriptural rites and ceremonies, canons, &c. here called 'the doctrines and commandments of men,' in contradistinction from divine institutions; as the traditions and superstitions of the Scribes and Pharisees, superadded to the divine law, are called by our Lord. If civil rulers concur in these impositions, or if they shall attempt the like by their own sole authority, and the claim of an ecclesiastical supremacy, this doctrine equally condemns their tyranny, and teaches, that no error, will-worship, or any species of false religion, by whomsoever commanded, in churches or states, can lay any obligation on conscience, which is immediately subject to God alone. But no such thing is taught, as that men's consciences are set free from obedience to any human authority, when acting in entire consistency with the word of God, and enjoining nothing beside it, or beyond its own proper limits; which authority of any kind may certainly do.

2. The lordship of God over the conscience, here asserted, extends to *morality*, as well as religious *worship;* and, if it sets aside all exercise of human authority about the latter, it must do so also as to the former. Persons often speak of conscience as if it were confined to the worship of God, whereas it extends to all duty. The lordship of God and liberty of conscience may be invaded by rulers in the one as well as the other; and if they shall command any thing which is contrary to the second table of the law, or prohibit what it requires, they are not to be obeyed any more

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more than if their commands contradicted the first. "We "ought to obey God rather than man," is a sufficient answer in both cases. 'God has left the conscience free from the 'doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any 'thing contrary to his word,' as well as in those which are 'beside it in matters of faith and worship.' But shall we infer from this, that there can be no exercise of civil authority respecting matters of morality, and of the duties of the second table? Certainly not.

Another general principle, to which recourse is had to vindicate the new sentiments adopted by the Synod, is contained in the Associate Presbytery's *Declaration and Defence of principles* respecting *Civil Government*, commonly called *the Answers to Nairn*, in which they state, that 'the whole in-'stitution and end' of the office of magistrates 'are cut out by, 'and lie within the compass of natural principles *.' The inference which is drawn from this is, that the power of magistrates does not extend to religion, particularly to matters of revelation; and it is pleaded, that this declaration of the Associate Presbytery, did limit and set aside that power in religious matters, which is ascribed to civil rulers by the Confession and other public papers of the Secession. The answer to this is similar to what was given to the preceding plea. This never

* 'The public good of outward and common order in all reasonable society, unto the glory of God, is the great and only end which these invested with Magistracy can propose, in a sole respect unto that office. And as, in prosecuting this end civilly, according to their office, it is only over men's good and evil works that they can have any inspection; so, it is only over these which they must needs take cognizance of, for the said public good: While, at the same time, their doing so must be in such a manner, and proceed so far allenarly, as is requisite for that end; without assuming any Lordship immediately over men's consciences, or making any encroachment upon the special privileges and business of the church. And moreover, as the whole institution and end of their office are cut out by, and lie within the compass of natural principles; it were absurd to suppose, that there could or ought to be any exercise thereof towards its end, in the foresaid circumstances, but what can be argued for and defended from natural principles: as indeed there is nothing especially allotted and allowed unto Magistrates, by the word of God and the Confessions of the Reformed Churches, but what can be so. Now, it must be agreeably to all THIS, that the apostle signifies Magistrates to be *God's Ministers for good*; concerning themselves with *good* and *evil works*,—in a way of *terror, praise*, or *revenge*: For he does so in a sole respect unto their civil office.' Display, vol. i. p. 311.

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never was, it could not be the design of this paragraph, or of the Associate Presbytery. On the contrary, what is there taught in regard to the origin, object, and extent of the office of civil magistrates is an introduction to the fullest approbation of what is ascribed to them *in the Confessions of the Reformed churches*, which, it is asserted, may be vindicated upon the same principles. By withholding this concluding part of the sentence and paragraph, in their quotations of it in their new deeds, the Synod have given a mangled view of its meaning, and limit their adherence to a part of the doctrine taught in that Declaration. After having done this, they hold forth this part of a paragraph, dismembered and detached from its connection, and understood in a sense contradictory to it, as exhibiting a just and adequate representation of the doctrine of the Associate Presbytery in their Declaration; although all office-bearers were hitherto taken bound to the whole doctrine contained in that paper! Further, in the same Declaration the Presbytery expressly approve of the application of civil power to religion, in what they say respecting the former Reformation of this land, and in the doctrine which they lay down, as to the duty of a nation and its rulers in settling their constitution, and conducting its administrations, as we have formerly shewed *. The general principle, above referred to, must be understood in a sense consistent with these express and particular specifications. But it is in a sense inconsistent with them that it is now explained and applied by the Synod.

Nor is this imposed meaning less inconsistent with the proper import of the words, than it is with the intention of the Associate Presbytery, and the whole scope of their Declaration. For, 1. *Natural principles* include *religion*, as one of their most important branches. This, however, is entirely overlooked by the Synod in their new deeds, as well as in the defences of them read in the Synod. Although they affect to make the difference to turn chiefly upon matters of revelation, yet they have preserved a deep silence respecting religion, as founded in natural principles, and forming,

* See p. 67. 68. 69.

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forming, in this view, a great object of magistratical concern and duty. They have taught nothing respecting the duty of civil rulers to preserve these principles; but, on the contrary, have excluded all interference of authority about them, as well as matters of supernatural revelation, by confining it to things merely civil, and the secular interests of mankind, and by proclaiming an universal liberty in matters of religion and the worship of God. Thus they have, in so far, gone over to the principles, and patronized the designs of those modern philosophers and politicians, who have made a total separation between religion and civil government; a scheme, which, considering its extensive spread of late times, and its pernicious tendency (as formerly hinted, p. 16.), there was a louder call to testify and guard against, than as to many things which the Synod have condemned in their new Testimony.

2. The right which magistrates have to interfere with religion, and to employ their power for its support is founded in *natural principles;* and is not pleaded for as originating from the Mediator's office, or as of supernatural institution, any more than other parts of his official power and duty.

3. *Natural principles* teach, that if God be pleased to grant a supernatural revelation of his will, declaring in what manner he will be worshipped (as he has done in the Scriptures), it is the duty of all, magistrates and people, to whom it is made known, to embrace, and, in their several stations, to promote and support this. The form which religion assumes in consequence of supernatural revelation is the only true one, and has a divine claim upon all that countenance and support which human laws can give it; and the application of the common principles of magistracy to the support of the true religion, and of the kingdom of Christ, as visibly erected in the world, does not remove it from its proper foundation, or ascribe new powers to the office.

4. Much error is also occasioned by an improper limitation of the end of the magistratical office. This is indeed 'the 'public good of outward and common order,' in distinction from

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from 'the disorders of men's hearts,' about which the gospel ministry is versant *. But, instead of excluding, this must comprehend the care of religion, which (as we shall see) is necessarily connected with the welfare of society; and particularly the true religion, as eminently calculated to promote this.

5. What belongs to magistracy in general, and to all magistrates, is not to be confounded with those things which belong to and are incumbent upon those who enjoy the benefit of divine revelation, and who rule over a people who make a profession of Christianity. Such a people have peculiar interests and privileges to secure and advance; and as it is their duty to provide for these in their constitution, so it is the duty of their rulers to attend to the same great object. Without this they cannot 'exercise their office for promoting the church's public good,' and the public good of that society over which they are placed in all its circumstances †.

—Another

* Display, vol. i. p. 312.

† When we speak of what is incumbent upon a person *as a Magistrate*, there is often an ambiguity in the use of the phrase. It sometimes means what is incumbent upon him in his *official* capacity, in distinction from what belongs to him in his *private* character, as a man or a Christian. But at other times, it signifies what is essential to the office, and belongs to all Magistrates, in every place and situation, in distinction from those things which belong to certain rulers, as placed in certain circumstances. In the latter sense, there are duties and acts of rulers, in their official capacity, which cannot be said to belong to them simply *as Magistrates*, but as clothed with some additional consideration. For example, there are many things incumbent upon the British Monarch, which are not incumbent upon him simply *as a king* or *magistrate*, but as a *British* king and magistrate. These arise from the particular constitution and laws, which in their turn (as far as they are proper) are rendered necessary by the peculiar interests and advantages of the nation, which need to be secured or advanced; such as their being a Christian and Protestant nation, a commercial nation, &c. As religious privileges and interests are of vastly more importance than those which are merely temporal, it is incumbent upon such a people to provide principally for their security and advancement, and a similar obligation must lie upon their rulers in the discharge of their office.

But all this respects the duty of the nation and its rulers, and is carefully to be distinguished from the duty of individuals, in acknowledging and submitting, in all lawful things, to a constitution and rulers, where there may be sinful negligence and deficiency in this matter, both as to qualifications and conduct. This constitutes an essential difference between the present controversy and that which the Associate Presbytery formerly managed with Mr Nairn. The question then was 'not,—what Magistrates *ought* to *be* or *do*. There is 'nothing this way incumbent upon them, by the word of God or our Covenants, which the Presbytery do not acknowledge and plead for.' But the question was, whether, while 'inviolably bound in our several capacities to con-

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—Another distinction, connected with the above, may be also here mentioned: What the magistrate owes to all his subjects in common, in the administration of justice, and the preservation of order and peace among them, is not to be confounded with what is competent to and incumbent upon him, in promoting and countenancing, by his authority, such institutions as contribute materially to the prosperity of the people over whom he rules; among which religion and pure Christianity must hold an important place. This distinction is laid down and illustrated by Mr Gib. After stating that, 'as to all temporal jurisdiction about men's natural rights and privileges,—the civil power is to proceed 'only upon *natural*, not upon revealed principles,' he adds: 'In all PUBLIC or MAGISTRATICAL administrations, which do 'not affect men's natural rights or privileges, the *civil power* when *Christian* is to proceed upon *revealed* as well as 'natural principles. He is to exercise his Christian judgment of discretion as to his countenancing or discountenancing of any in the matter of their religious principles 'and profession; *as to what particular Church-state should 'be favoured with legal securities and privileges;* and as to 'what persons should be entrusted with places of power under him, for the *public good* of *ecclesiastical* as well as of 'civil society. In all which he encroaches upon no man's 'birth-right; but only maintains a good conscience about a 'proper subserviency of his *power* to the kingdom of JESUS 'CHRIST *.'

Before leaving this part of the subject, it may be proper to advert, very briefly, to another pretext for departing from the

'fess, oppose, and testify against all the corruptions and evils of the present 'civil government over these nations; whereby the reformation once established 'ed therein has been departed from, opposed, and overthrown: OUGHT *we not* 'at the same time to *acknowledge* the *civil authority* of the said government, in 'the administration and commands thereof that are lawful, and to yield subjection thereunto in these circumstances?' Display, vol. i. p. 291. 292. The question presently agitated between the Synod and the brethren who have protested against their late acts, does not at all respect the point of subjection in the foresaid circumstances, on which these brethren hold the affirmative with the Associate Presbytery. But the present question is, What Magistrates OUGHT *to* BE *and* DO.

* Display, vol. ii. p. 408.

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the principles of the church of Scotland on this head, which is taken from the Act of Assembly receiving the Westminster Confession of Faith. This Act may be seen prefixed to the Confession, and any person who gives it an attentive perusal may be convinced, that, instead of giving any countenance to the proceedings of the Synod, it condemns them. The explication which it contains does not refer to the general doctrine which the Confession teaches respecting the Magistrates power about religion, which the Assembly approved, as well as its other doctrines, as 'most orthodox, 'and grounded upon the word of God.' It bears no reference whatever to Chapters xx. § 4. xxiii. § 3. against which the Synod except. It refers exclusively to some parts of the second article of the thirty-first chapter, and to the single point of the calling of ecclesiastical assemblies. It does not condemn the doctrine there taught, but simply declares, that 'the Assembly understandeth' it 'only of kirks not 'settled or constituted in point of government.' It asserts the intrinsic right of the church to hold her own assemblies as often as necessary, although the magistrate, after proper representation, should with-hold or deny his consent; which had always been the avowed principle and right of the church of Scotland. When we consider the faithfulness of that church in asserting and holding fast what she had always professed, and had sworn to maintain, at the time she was receiving a new Confession, it is certainly preposterous to urge this as a vindication of the conduct of a Synod who have departed from a doctrine which they had received, and excepted and set aside articles contained in that Confession, the whole doctrine of which they had avouched, and sworn to maintain and defend against all contrary errors.—Besides, the Act of Assembly expressly allows to Magistrates a power of calling assemblies occasionally; 'it being always 'free to the magistrate to advise with Synods of ministers 'and ruling elders, meeting upon delegation from their 'churches, either ordinarily, or, being indicted by his authority, occasionally and *pro re nata*." This allowance is also

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expressly made by the Associate Presbytery in the Judicial Testimony, in the very place in which they assert the spirituality, freedom, and independence of the church, and the intrinsic warrant which her office-bearers have from the Lord Jesus to hold ecclesiastical assemblies; so far were they from thinking that the exercise of civil power about ecclesiastical concerns, when duly limited, was inconsistent with these important truths *. So that, in every point of view, the plea from this Act is untenable, and only serves to involve those who urge it in contradiction and inconsistency.

By the preceding statement of the doctrine of the Reformed churches and the Secession, it is far from our design to rest the truth of the doctrine, or our adherence to it, upon the opinions of men, or the authority of churches. We have been necessitated to state these things so particularly, by the bold and unaccountable allegations of men, who, in order to cover the introduction of a new scheme of principles, and the imposition of it upon others, have denied all change, and attempted to fix principles upon men and churches opposite to those which they have publicly avowed; and who, by such conduct, have struck at the foundation of all certainty as to any knowledge of sentiments conveyed by the plainest and most unequivocal expressions, and thus, in so far, frustrated the great end for which subordinate standards were composed and received. As we have no hesitation respecting the agreeableness of the sentiments which we maintain to reason and revelation, it would have been a more grateful task to us to have confined ourselves to this part of the subject, and to have begun with what we now proceed to state. To use the words of one who formerly pleaded the same cause; 'though we have such a noble cloud of witnesses to 'lead us in this contest, let none of our adversaries think 'that we fly to their great names for shelter to a weak 'cause; no, we are willing it be tried at the bar of scripture 'or

* Display, vol. i. p. 157.

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'or reason, as they please. Though indeed they may know 'how oft it hath been tried there already, and come off with 'triumph; and we are persuaded will still do so *.'

SECTION VII.

BRIEF VIEW OF THE EVIDENCE FOR THE EXERCISE OF CIVIL AUTHORITY ABOUT RELIGION.

IN maintaining the lawfulness and duty of employing civil authority for the public support and advancement of religion, we have the advantage of proceeding upon the broadest, most liberal, and solid principles. We have the aid of the light of nature, the principles of sound government, and the inspired dictates of revelation. The nature of the present work does not admit of a full and argumentative discussion of these; all that can at present be proposed is a summary exhibition of some of the principal grounds, leaving the more ample illustration and confirmation of them to a future opportunity.—There are different ways in which the right to exercise a particular authority, or the warrant for performing certain duties may be established. Among these, the following are mentioned by approved writers; the light of nature,—approved scripture-examples,—scripture-precepts,—and scripture promises and predictions. The power in question is supported by all of these.

By the light of nature.—The force of the argument which arises from this is allowed by all sound divines †. Those who agree that the whole institution and end of magistracy are founded in *natural principles*, and that its exercise may be

* Willison's Defence of National Churches, p. 6.

† The argument for a *divine right* from the *light and law of nature*, is illustrated and confirmed by the following (not to mention many other) authors, who apply it in Defence of Presbyterian Church-government, as well as other truths. Gillespie's Assertion of the government of the church of Scotland, p. 154. Divine Right of Church-government, by the ministers of London, Part I. Chap. iii. Willison's Defence of National Churches, Chap. ii.

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be argued for and defended from them, cannot refuse an appeal to these principles, and must submit to the award which they pronounce.—The employment of civil power in the support of religion will appear to be founded in the light of nature, whether we consider this as manifested by the general consent of mankind; the relation in which rulers stand to the great Creator and Moral Governor of the world, with the obligations resulting from this; or the end of civil government, with the means which are necessary and conducive to the attainment of this end.

The general consent of mankind is allowed to be the strongest presumption in favour of a natural principle: from this moralists and divines have argued strongly in support of the Being of God, public and social worship with its various parts, a providence, the distinction between moral good and evil, and a future state. We read in the New Testament of a vice which crept into the church of Corinth, and was for some time tolerated in it, which was "not so "much as named among the Gentiles*." Of the error which has crept into the Secession, and which is now so zealously patronised, it may be said, it is an error which was "not "so much as named among the Gentiles." No sentiment has been more common among all nations than this, that it is the most important duty of those invested with public authority to pay attention to the interests of religion. The legislators and wise men among the heathen bear united testimony to this truth †. In the codes of law established in Greece and Rome, there were laws respecting religion, which were reckoned the most sacred and inviolable ‡. And in

* 1 Cor. v. 1.

† *Plato* asserts that 'religion ought to be the principal object of care in 'every republic,' De Repub. *Aristotle* assigns the first place among political duties to 'the care about divine things,' περὶ τὸ θεῖον ἐπιμέλειαν, De Polit. 'The 'first law of the constitution (says Archytas) should be for the support of what 'belongs to the gods; the second, for what relates to our parents.' Apud Stobeum.

‡ The first law in the Twelve Tables of the ancient Roman institute was, 'Reverence for the gods;' and by the laws of the Greeks, blasphemy, the violation of religion, &c. were made objects of punishment. Archæologiæ Atticæ, p. 117.

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in almost all nations, not only the civilized, but the more barbarous, ancient as well as modern, the public countenance of religion, with provision for its institutions, has formed, in one way or another, an important branch of their political regulations. These are the dictates of common reason, received and acknowledged among mankind; they are the voice of God, speaking by men of all ages and countries.

This argument is not invalidated by the application of the principle to the support of a false religion, and the worship of them who were "by nature no gods." Wherever superstition, idolatry, and polytheism prevail, they will obtain the public countenance and support, in every way in which it can be given, and which is due only to the true religion. But this is not an objection to a national religion, any more than it is to public and social worship, stated places of meeting, ministers of religion, with many things of a similar kind, which in such a state of matters are all perverted and misapplied. Rather let us say with the prophet, "All people "will walk every one in the name of his God; and we will "walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever*."

The common sentiments of men on this point are justified by the strongest reasons. The obligation which all are under, individually, to maintain the honour, and support the worship of God, attaches in an especial manner to nations and those who are in public authority over them. 'Let 'us begin with God,' is a maxim applicable to the formation of civil society and laws, as well as to other important undertakings. Men are not to herd together like a number of cattle, making provision merely for their external protection, accommodation, and order, forgetting the God that is above. A constitution which did not recognize religion, nor make any provision for its maintenance and defence, would be, in so far, an atheistical constitution.—As magistracy is an ordinance of God, and those invested with it, though chosen by men, are "the ministers of God," such persons must be under special obligations to maintain his honour. This they are

* Micah iv. 5.

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are bound to do, not merely by the preservation of justice and peace, but by promoting his worship in their official station, and by resenting open indignities and contempt offered to the Majesty of heaven, by whom they rule, and decree justice. 'As all power, whether it be in a natural or civil 'capacity, is derived from God, so in all *commissions* of '*power*, of what kind or nature soever, a strict obligation 'to maintain the honour and character of him from whom 'we receive our power is always understood, though it be 'not expressed.—For, is there any master upon earth who 'will account that his servant has done his duty, barely by 'attending the work and business more immediately belonging to his station, if it appear that such servant can sit 'still contentedly and unconcerned, when he hears his master reproached and reviled *?'. The sum of this argument is, that the honour and worship of God ought to be preserved and promoted by those large societies which are collected, superintended, and maintained by his providence; by magistracy, which is his ordinance; by laws, which are an emanation from his authority and justice; and by magistrates, who act as his vicegerents on earth;—and consequently, that these are not to be confined to mere civil and secular concerns, to the exclusion of religion.

The principle is farther confirmed by the consideration that religion lies at the very foundation of civil society, and that its sanctions and influence are necessary, in order to gain even the direct and immediate end of government, in the preservation of justice and peace among men. From this connection between religion and civil polity, the most enlightened

* Bishop of London's Sermon on Psal. cxix. 136. printed anno 1723. p. 17, 18. He adds in the same place, 'If the question be asked to what order of 'men the protecting of religion and maintaining the honour of God does be-'long, the proper answer is, that it belongs to all orders, to Ministers, Magistrates, 'and all mankind, of what rank and degree soever.—It is the voice of nature 'and reason, and of all ages and countries that have been worshippers of the 'true God; and it will be time enough to make it a question to what part of 'mankind the work belongs, when we see any part over-zealous and over-active in it; it will be time enough to *discharge* any sort from the service, when 'virtue and religion have visibly got the better of vice and profaneness, and we 'see them in quiet possession of their conquests.'

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lightened writers on jurisprudence have inculcated it, as the duty of rulers, to give public countenance to religious institutions *. Hence it becomes the high duty of legislators and rulers to avail themselves of the sanctions and obligations of religion, to take order that their subjects be instructed in its principles, and that those institutions be maintained and respected among them which are calculated to impress a sense of it upon the mind, and to dispose them to act under its powerful influence. Truth and utility, duty to God and sound policy, conspire here in the same demand.

The mere laws of men, even when sanctioned with the severest and capital punishments, will prove ineffectual for restraining the wickedness of mankind from breaking out into acts of injustice and violence. It is the belief of a Supreme Being, a providence, with a future state of punishment, which renders capital executions so dreadful. Let legislators and magistrates once allow the impressions of these to wear off the minds of their subjects, and they will no longer stand in awe of the axe or the halter; let them listen to the delusive doctrine, that, in the government of men, they are to trust to the use of means merely civil, and that the preservation and support of religion form no part of their official duty, and they shall soon find that the swelling torrent of ignorance, irreligion, infidelity and contempt of divine ordinances, with that profligacy of manners which is their never failing attendant, will overbear all the barriers of civil restraints, fenced with the highest penalties, render their execution fruitless, and at last dangerous and impracticable.

* *Cicero* pronounces, 'religion the foundation of human society;' and shews of what great importance it is for rulers to have the people impressed with a sense of religion, to preserve religious institutions, suppress impiety, &c. De Nat. Deor. De Legib. Plato calls religion 'the bulwark of government, 'the bond of all society, the firmest support of legislation;' and in his book *Concerning laws*, he reckons it a necessary introduction, to establish the being and providence of the gods by a law against sacrilege. 'Religion (says Plu-'tarch) is the first thing which claims attention in the framing of laws, for you 'may as easily build a city without ground, as preserve order among the citi-'zens without a belief of the Deity.—Therefore, by oaths, vows, &c. Lycurgus 'sanctified the Lacedemonians, Numa the Romans, ancient Ion the Athenians, 'and Deucalion the Greeks in general; and, by hopes and fears, kept up amongst 'them the awe and reverence of religion.'

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The deplorable condition of some countries at certain times, when every restraint respecting religion has been thrown loose, the minds and manners of the people debauched by infidelity and impiety, or debased by ignorance and gross superstition, when executions have been in vain heaped upon executions, with the view of checking the most abominable vices, and the most daring crimes, until both spectators and criminals have become callous, and ceased to regard them with horror,—is an awful proof of this, and a monitory example to rulers, and to all who may endeavour to mislead them in this important affair. By taking religion under the protection of law, giving public and decided countenance to its institutions, and by a national establishment, which provides for the religious instruction of their subjects, they employ means the best adapted for preventing or reforming such evils, and which conduce to lessen the necessity for the execution of penal and sanguinary laws, which will always be an object of great moment in the eye of a wise and humane legislature *.

We might also have shewed that there are many vices hurtful to civil society, which yet do not come under penal laws, or cannot be suppressed by the direct exercise of civil authority; as well as various duties and virtues, the practice of which is of high utility, although they cannot be directly commanded or enforced by laws. The former are prevented or corrected, and the latter produced and cherished, by religion. It is by publicly countenancing and supporting religion, and the institutions of a church-state, where this is enjoyed, that government gains these important ends. It is surely unnecessary to add, that Christianity, as the true religion, and in the purest form of it, being eminently calculated to promote these purposes, is best entitled, on

* 'Common sense, as well as the experience of all ages, teaches us, that no 'government can flourish which does not encourage and propagate religion 'and morality among all its particular members.—Cicero makes it of doubt, 'whether it be possible for a community to exist that had not a prevailing 'mixture of piety in its constitution. A man who would hope to govern a 'society without regard to these principles, is as much to be contemned for his 'folly, as detested for his impiety.' Freeholder, No. 29.

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on these grounds, as well as on account of its divine claims, to all that countenance which civil authority can give to its doctrines and institutions.

The last consideration which we shall urge on this branch of the argument is, that besides the direct and proximate end of the magistrates office, there are other ends more remote, though not less important and connected with the public good of his subjects, which it is his duty to promote. Although the preservation of justice, outward peace and order, is his immediate end, yet he is not to rest satisfied with the bare attainment of this. The amelioration of mankind ought surely to be the grand aim and constant study of patriotic legislators, and Christian rulers. To satisfy themselves with such order and peace as are common to the inferior animals, or essential to human society, would be to forget that they are placed over reasonable and immortal beings. The improvement of various arts and sciences, and the advancement of knowledge in general, cannot be called the direct and immediate ends of civil government; but who would say that it has no concern with them? And if civil rulers paid no attention to them, and made no laws for their encouragement, under the pretext that they belonged to artizans and philosophers, would they be considered as discharging all the duties of their office, and employing their power, as they ought, for the public good? The observation applies more forcibly to morality and religion, which not only have the greatest influence upon the outward prosperity of nations, but embrace the most interesting concerns and enlarged good of all the individuals of which they are composed. Civil government was not instituted, nor magistrates appointed, for the direct end of promoting the spiritual interests and eternal welfare of men, yet, whatever assistance they can afford to those institutions which have these for their object, it must be a high and indispensible duty in all who occupy this station to yield. And who can doubt that they have much in this way in their power. By a public establishment, which provides the means of religious instruction, and for the dispensation of

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all divine ordinances, where the true religion is enjoyed, and by taking order, in their station, that these be preserved and perpetuated, they may contribute, not merely to make those over whom they rule better subjects and members of society, but to the conversion and salvation of thousands *. The views of the *Christian* and of the *Magistrate* do here coincide. And here also the hurtful tendency of the new opinions appears, as, by excluding religion from the province of magistrates, they hinder them from supporting institutions which contribute to advance the highest interests of mankind, both individually and socially.

But say we these things as men? Saith not the law the same also? Revelation confirms what the law of nature teaches. These two cannot be at variance, as they proceed from the same Author, although in different ways. The revealed law contains a more sure and full exhibition of the rule of righteousness, by which the conduct of all ought to be regulated. The moral law in all its extent is binding upon men, socially as well as individually, and it is the duty

* ' Les Souverains (says Pictet) sont indispensablement obligez de se meler ' des affaires de la religion, et en qualité de *Chretiens*, et en qualité des *Souve-* ' *rains*. Comme *Chretiens*, ils doivent consacrer tous leur soins, et toutes leur ' forces a l'avancement de la gloire de Dieu, a leur salut, et au salut de leur pro- ' chains. Comme *Souverains* ils sont engager par leur charges a procurer a leur ' peuples tous les biens, et toute la felicite qu'ils peuvent leur procurer, et par ' consequent, les biens celestes; c'est la plus grande to toutes les absurditez ' de vouloir que les Rois et les Magistrats travaillent a rendre leur sujets riches ' et heureux selon le monde, et qu'ils negligent ce qui peut servir a le rendre ' bien-heureux pour tout l'eternite; qu'ls ayent soin de faire fleurir dens leurs ' royaume et dans leur etats les beaux arts et les sciences humains, et quine ' se soucient point d'y faire regner la veritable religion ; i. e. Sovereigns are ' indispensibly bound to concern themselves with the affairs of religion, both in ' the character of *Christians* and in the character of *Sovereigns*. As *Christians*, they should consecrate all their care and abilities to the advancement of the ' glory of God, of their own salvation, and that of their neighbours. As *So-* ' *vereigns*, they are bound by their office to procure for their people all ' the good things, and all the happiness which they can; and consequently ' heavenly good things. It is the greatest of all absurdities, to hold that Kings ' and Magistrates should labour to make their subjects rich and happy as to the ' things of this world, but neglect that which will serve to make them happy ' through all eternity; that they should endeavour to make the fine arts and ' human sciences to flourish in their kingdoms and states, but exercise no care ' to make the true religion to reign in them.' Pictet. Theol. Chret. Tom II. Liv. xiv. Chap. 33. p. 306.

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duty of every one, according to his place and station, to provide that its commandments be regarded. It is a rule given by sound casuists, in the interpretation of the moral law, 'that what is forbidden or commanded to ourselves, 'we are bound, *according to our places*, to endeavour that 'it may be avoided or performed by others, according to 'the duty of their places*.' Gen xviii. 19. xxxv. 1, 3. Exod. xx. 10. 1 Sam. iii. 13. This rule applies to both tables of the law. By the 6th commandment we are not only prohibited from taking away or injuring the life of our neighbour, but we are obliged to use all lawful endeavours, according to the station in which we are placed, to prevent others from committing this crime; and if we neglect these, the blood of the person will be required at our hands. In like manner, by the 4th commandment we are bound not only to sanctify the sabbath ourselves, but to use all means competent to us, in our station, to prevent its profanation by others. And so respecting all the other commandments. This holds especially true respecting all persons in authority, as parents, masters, and magistrates, who are bound to use not merely their advice and example, but also their *authority*, for promoting the observance of the divine law, and for preventing or restraining open violations of it.

Magistrates, in particular, are keepers, or guardians, of the moral law, of the first as well as the second table †, and, as "the ministers of God," are eminently bound to promote his honour, and to see that his law is respected. With this

* Larger Catechism, Quest. 99. Rule 7.

† Deut. xvii. 18; 19. Cum sit Magistratus (says Dr Rivet) utriusque tabulæ 'custos et vindex, cui ideo olim imperatum est ut a sacerdotibus exemplar legis 'acciperet, Deut. xvii. 18. illudque præceptum, cum aliis similibus, ei sit datum 'non tanquam privato homini, sed tanquam regi, voluit Deus eum intelligere 'non solum propter se obstrictum esse ad legis observationem, sed etiam potes-'tatem officii ipsius ad observationem, legis divinæ adhibibendam esse.' i e. 'Seeing the magistrate is a guardian and avenger of both tables, to whom 'therefore of old it was commanded, that he should receive a copy of the law 'from the priests, Deut. xvii. 18; and as that command, with similar ones, was 'given him not as a private man, but as a king, God would have him under-'stand, that he was bound not only to obey the law himself, but also to make 'use of his official authority to procure the observance of the law.' Rivet. in Decalog. apud Op. Tom. I. p. 1373.

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this view the 4th commandment is particularly directed to them, as well as to parents and masters; "Thou shalt not "do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy "man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor "thy stranger that is WITHIN THY GATES," Exod. xx. 10, The prophet Jeremiah was commanded to "stand in the "gates of the children of the people, by which the kings of "Judah come in, and by which they go out, and in all the "gates of Jerusalem," and to renew his command to "bring "in no burden through the gates of this city on the sab- "bath day, and to hallow the sabbath, to do no work there- "in;" promising, that, if they hearkened to him, there should "enter into the gates of this city, kings and princes "sitting upon the throne of David;" but denouncing the judgments of God if they transgressed this command, Jer. xvii. 19,—27. compare chap. xxii. 1—9. The reason annexed to the 3d commandment implies, that magistrates should hold men guilty, and punish them for transgressions of it; although they often suffer such to escape with impunity. And the signal vengeance which God, in the 2d commandment, threatens to execute upon a people who deprave his worship, particularly by idolatry, with the special promise made to those who preserve it, urges strongly upon magistrates the duty of providing that the ordinances of Heaven be kept pure and entire among those over whom they rule. This not only excited the godly kings of Judah to remove the monuments of idolatry, and to provide for the restoration of the worship of God, 2 Kings xxii. 9—17. and xxiii. 1—8. But it also had a powerful influence upon the Persian Monarchs, in disposing them to exert their authority for rebuilding the temple, and advancing the worship of God at Jerusalem. "I (Darius) make a decree "what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the build- "ing of the house of God; that of the king's goods, even "of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expences be "given unto these men, that they be not hindered. And "that which they have need of, both young bullocks, &c.

"for

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" for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven—let it be " given them day by day without fail; that they may offer " sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and " PRAY FOR THE LIFE OF THE KING AND OF HIS SONS," Ezra vi. 8—10. And again, " I, even I, Artaxerxes the king, " do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond " the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of " the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be " done speedily, unto an hundred talents of silver, &c. " Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it " be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven, " FOR WHY SHOULD THERE BE WRATH AGAINST THE REALM " OF THE KING AND HIS SONS," Ezra vii. 21—23. Is God less jealous about the observance of his worship *now*, than he was of old? Or shall *Christian* rulers have less concern with it, in their official character and administrations, than the *Persian* kings? Read Isa. lx. 9—12. and Zech. xiv. 17—19.

" He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the " fear of God," 2 Samuel xxiii. 3. not merely by acting religiously himself, but by promoting religion among those over whom he rules *; " scattering away all evil," and " cutting off all wicked doers from the city of the " Lord †." " The fear of God" disposed Nehemiah, the governor, to " seek the welfare of the children of Israel," not only by generously sacrificing the emoluments of his office, but by exerting his authority for preventing the profanation of the Sabbath, and issuing his commands and threatenings to those who persisted in its violation, Neh. xiii. 17, 18. In the same religious manner did he act in repairing the house of God, purging it from the defilement which the priest had suffered, and in providing for the regular performance

* ' They (magistrates) must rule in the fear of God, i. e. they must themselves be possessed with a fear of God, by which they will be effectually restrained from all acts of injustice and oppression. They must also endeavour to promote the fear of God, i. e. the practice of religion, among those over whom they rule. The magistrate is to be the keeper of both tables, and to protect both godliness and honesty.' Henry on 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

† Prov. xx. 8, 26. Psal. ci. 8. and lxxv. 4, 10.

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formance of divine ordinances: " And I perceived (says he) " that the portions of the Levites had not been given them; " for the Levites and singers that did the work, were fled " every one to his field. Then contended I with the nobles, " &c. Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and " wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the " house of my God, and the offices thereof," chap. xiii. 9—14.

It was formerly stated that one way in which a divine right, or the warrant for any duty is established, is by approved examples in scripture. The word of God contains examples to persons in every character and station of life. In particular, it exhibits examples of godly magistrates. *But where do we read, in all the book of God, of approved magistrates who confined themselves, in their official capacity, to civil matters, and the secular interests of mankind, and who did not employ their authority for the advancement of religion?* We have a large account of the conduct of Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon, Aza and Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. Who will deny that their actions are recorded as an example to rulers? But they are commended chiefly for the warm zeal and activity, which they displayed in their station, in settling or reforming religion, providing for the instruction of their subjects, and the due administration of divine ordinances. No magistrate, who consults the Bible, will ever imagine that religious matters are excluded from his province. This notion must have been imbibed from some very different source.

At those times in which God was about to effect an establishment of religion, or a general reformation of its interests, among his ancient people, he raised up and employed magistrates, to co-operate in this work with those to whom the immediate charge of religious administrations was committed. When he first established his ordinances among Israel as a nation, he not only employed Aaron the priest, but Moses, the King in Jeshurun; and afterwards Joshua and Eleazar, David and Abiathar, Solomon and Zadok, Hezekiah and Azariah,

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Azariah, Zerubbabel and Joshua. When deprived of their native princes, and under the dominion of a foreign power, the Lord stirred up the Persian Monarchs to favour the cause of his people, and not merely to tolerate, but encourage them by public edicts, and by granting them positive assistance for building the house of God, and maintaining his worship. And although, for special and wise reasons (which we may afterwards notice), he was pleased at first to spread the gospel among the nations, not only without the assistance of civil rulers, but in the face of their most determined opposition; yet, among the blessings promised to the church in New Testament times, as a testimony of his distinguished favour, are the countenance and aid of earthly powers, expressed with evident allusion to what had formerly taken place. "The sons of strangers shall "build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto "thee,—thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and "shalt suck the breasts of kings," Isa. lx. 10,—16.

It is not pleaded, that all the actions of rulers among the Jews are imitable by Christian magistrates, or that the latter have exactly the same power which was allotted to and exercised by the former. Even in ascertaining the power which belonged to Jewish magistrates as such, we must distinguish what they did in the proper exercise of their magistratical office, from those things which they performed in a different character. For example, Moses acted not only as an ordinary magistrate, but also as a prophet, and extraordinary messenger, in the establishment of religion in the wilderness. David, too, sustained the character, and discharged the office not only of a king, but also of a prophet and inspired penman, in the composition of the psalmody, and in the arrangement of the public worship of God in the sanctuary. The power which was exercised by Jewish rulers was also warranted, in many cases, by judicial laws, which were peculiar to the nation of Israel; founded upon that singular constitution given unto them by God, and bearing a necessary reference to the system of ceremonial

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and sacrifical worship which was erected among them, but now abolished. Presbyterians, who have defended the power of Christian magistrates from these examples, have not pleaded an absolute parity, and have made more accurate distinctions on this head than are to be found in the writings of the advocates of the modern scheme, who usually confound the characters in which Jewish rulers acted, represent their power as wholly ecclesiastical, and extending to almost every thing, with the view of making it appear totally inapplicable to the Christian dispensation.

But it will not follow from this, that we can draw no argument from the conduct of Jewish rulers, to establish the warrantableness and duty of Christian magistrates employing their power in support of religion. Some are ready to conclude that the argument is entirely set aside, when it is allowed that there is not an absolute sameness between the two cases. Nothing can, however, be more unfounded than this conclusion. Such a mode of reasoning is of the most dangerous tendency, and, if applied in all the extent to which it will lead, it would cut off the practical use of the greater part of the Old Testament. According to it, no argument could be drawn from the approved examples which it records, of persons of any rank, or in any station, of parents or children, husbands or wives, masters or servants, because many of their actions were peculiar, or clothed with extraordinary circumstances. Upon the same principle, a great part of the New Testament may also be set aside, as to any ordinary or current application. For many things recorded in it were peculiar, and in some respects extraordinary. Persons possessed of apostolical powers, and extraordinary gifts, were employed in all important ecclesiastical transactions,—in founding churches, ordaining office-bearers, inflicting censures, pronouncing decrees, and administering all ordinances. It is sometimes difficult to discriminate between what was extraordinary, and peculiar to that period, and what belongs to the ordinary power of office-bearers.

Besides those actions of Old Testament rulers, which proceeded

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ceeded upon moral grounds, and which had for their object things which are substantially immutable, such as the support of public worship, and the prevention of blasphemy, profanation of the name of God, and sabbath-breaking; there is an application of their example in the way of *analogy*, which, while it makes all allowances for the diversity of circumstances, and change of dispensation, proceeds upon a general resemblance in certain common principles and ends. Although there is a great difference between the government of the church under the Old and the New Testament, yet the writers in defence of Presbyterian government do argue from the Old Testament in behalf of courts of judicature, with their subordination. Even as to positive institutions of worship, this mode of reasoning must be admitted, unless we become wholly Anabaptistical. There is a difference in various respects between circumcision and baptism; yet we reason from the circumcision of infants under the Old Testament to the baptism of them under the new, although we have no explicit command or example for the practice in the New Testament. The apostle argues for the support of a gospel-ministry from that which was given to the Levitical priesthood; but his argument did not imply that they should be supported exactly in the same way, 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. The priestly and prophetical offices were extraordinary and typical, in a sense in which the regal among the Jews was not; yet we do not scruple to illustrate the office, and enforce the duties of ministers of the gospel, from those of the priests and prophets, especially in their actions with reference to the public state of religion, and in advancing reformation. The judgments inflicted upon the Israelites in the wilderness were in many respects peculiar, yet the apostle holds them out as monitory ensamples to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. x. The prayer of Elijah was extraordinary, yet the apostle James urges it as exemplary to Christians, chap. v. 16,—18. And shall we suppose that the actions of Jewish magistrates form a single exception, and that they were so peculiar, that we cannot reason from them in the way of example or analogy.

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We cannot propose here to enter particularly upon the consideration of the Jewish constitution. Extremes on both hands are to be guarded against. Those who maintain that it was altogether peculiar and inimitable do err, as well as those who hold that it is in all respects a model for Christian nations. The golden mean is to be studied on this, as in many other subjects, although the discovery of it may cost more trouble than the readier expedient of an extreme. It was a constitution immediately framed by God, adapted to the state of that nation, to the system of religious ordinances established among them, and to the designs of providence in preserving them as a separate people. But, although taken as a whole, it was certainly singular, and not to be paralleled or exemplified in any other nation, several of the considerations mentioned serve to shew, that it is entitled to the particular regard of all nations who are favoured with divine revelation. In it we have the example of a system of legislation, adapted to the state of a people who were favoured with the true religion. Every thing in it was subordinated to this important concern. The laws expressly recognised religion, provided for the maintenance of its ordinances, and the rulers were taken solemnly bound to support them in their station. Thus, those principles which are founded in the light of nature, and by which all nations are obligated to regulate themselves, in framing their constitution and conducting their administrations, so as to promote the honour of God, and to accord with, secure, and advance religion, the highest of all their interests,—were recognised and sanctioned by Jehovah himself, and applied to the true religion revealed from heaven. In this respect the Jewish constitution is exemplary to Christian nations *.

With

* ‘ As it was once a peculiar duty of the *Jewish* nation, so it is peculiarly incumbent upon every civil state whereinto Christianity is introduced, to study and bring to pass,—that civil government among them, in all the appurtenances of its constitution and administration, run in an agreeableness to the *word* of *God;* be subservient unto the spiritual kingdom of *Jesus Christ*, and to the interests

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With respect to the particular laws by which the Jews were governed, the common sentiment of sound divines, and the best writers on the laws of nations, is, that although the judicial law is not binding as such upon Christian nations, so that they should be bound to regulate all their laws according unto it, yet it demands distinguished attention, and is to be regarded, as a pattern, in those laws which proceeded upon moral grounds. In it there was nothing inconsistent with the principles of equity and religion. God gave unto Israel "right judgments and true laws, good sta- "tutes and commandments." All just laws among men are deductions from the moral law, applied to human affairs. But in the judicial law, the conclusions were deduced and applied, not by the fallible and corrupt reason of man (as in ordinary laws), but by unerring wisdom. These respected either the first or second table of the moral law, duties which immediately related to God or man. It is a radical mistake, on this subject, to suppose that the peculiarity of the judicial law did lie solely and properly in its reference to matters of religion, or the first table. It is to be observed also in those laws which related to things civil, or the duties of the second table. There is no more propriety in representing all the judicial laws respecting the first table as peculiar, than there is in representing all those which related to the second table as peculiar. Peculiarities there were in both; but, after allowances are made for these, there

terests of the true religion and reformation of the Church: As otherwise they cannot truly prosper in their civil concerns, nor be enriched by the blessings of the gospel.

'This duty, so incumbent upon the civil state, doth generally fall under these two heads: *First*, The whole people, adjoining themselves to the true Church, should approve themselves to be true members thereof; by serious, several, and mutual endeavours to promote the true religion and reformation of the Church, —privately, publicly, and universally, in their several places and callings. *Secondly*, This people, considered in their conjunct and *politic* capacity (as thus only the matter is competent unto them) should, by their deed of civil constitution, provide,—that their Magistrates be obliged to concur in the same true religion and reformation; and to rule them by laws no way prejudicial, but serviceable thereunto: As, moreover, they ought to obey, encourage and support their Magistrates in that way; and effectually to endeavour their information and reformation, where deficient or corrupt.' Display, vol. i. p. 280.

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there remain moral grounds for both; and whatever proceeded upon moral grounds in the judicial law, whether it respected things immediately connected with religion, or with justice and civil order, is exemplary, and must be obligatory *.

If this consideration be attended to, it will set aside the force of those arguments which are usually adduced, to prove that Jewish rulers can be no example to Christian magistrates in the exercise of their power about religion. Is it urged that the office of Jewish rulers was *sacred?* This sanctity must have extended to all their official conduct; and if it proves that their acts about religion are in no respect exemplary, it must prove the same as to their acts about civil matters. Is it urged that the office was *typical?* A similar answer may be returned. The Jewish rulers were types of Christ in acts which respected civil matters as well as religious. Is it pleaded that the laws respecting religion, which the Jewish rulers executed, were immediately given by God? This was the case also with those which respected the administration of common justice. In fine, is it pleaded that the punishments inflicted by the Jewish law, on account of offences against the first table of the law, were severe, and enacted on some grounds which were peculiar to the Jewish people? The same thing is true with respect to offences against the second table. If he that blasphemed

* Although (says Dr Owen) 'the institutions and examples of the Old 'Testament of the duty of magistrates, in the things and about the worship 'of God—are not in their whole latitude and extent to be drawn into rules, that 'should be obligatory on all magistrates, now under the administration of the 'gospel; and that because the magistrates were then *custos vindex & administra-* 'tor legis judicialis & politiæ Mosaicæ, from which, as most think, we are 'freed;—yet doubtless there is something in those institutions, which being 'uncloathed of their Judicial form, is still binding to all in the like kind, as to 'some analogy and proportion. Substract from those administrations what 'was proper to, and lies upon the account of the *nation and church* of the Jews; 'and what remains upon the general notion of a church and nation must be 'everlastingly binding; and this amounts thus far *at least*, That Judges, Rulers, 'and Magistrates, which are promised under the New Testament to be 'given in mercy, and to be singular in usefulness, as the Judges were under 'the Old, are to take care that the gospel church may, in all its concern- 'ments as such, be *supported* and promoted, and the truth propagated, where- 'with they are intrusted.' Owen's Sermon on Dan. vii. 15, 16. p. 52, 53.

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phemed God, or profaned the Sabbath was to be stoned to death; the person who smote, or cursed his father or mother, or who proved a stubborn or rebellious son, was to be put to death, Exod. xxi. 15,—17. Deut. xxi. 18,—21. Christian nations are not bound in all cases to inflict the same penalties which were appointed by the judicial law, for offences against the second table, any more than for such as were committed against the first table. But this does not say that persons guilty of offences of both kinds are not still proper objects of punishment, to a certain degree, by human laws, or even that they may not, in certain circumstances, become justly obnoxious to the same punishments.

Persons may affect to talk of the difficulty of ascertaining what is moral and exemplary in this matter, from what was peculiar; and, by dwelling on the more intricate cases, may endeavour to lead away the attention from the subject altogether. But why should it be magnified, and represented as unsurmountable, any more than others of a similar kind. The peculiarity of the divine government of Israel, or, as it is commonly called, the *Theocracy*, consisted in general in two things; in a system of laws which was immediately given unto that people from heaven,—and in the exercise of a peculiar providence in supporting and sanctioning that system, by conferring national mercies and inflicting national judgments, often in an immediate and extraordinary way. Now, why are not the difficulties which are started, as to the application of the first of these, urged also as to the application of the last? If we cannot apply what is said in the Old Testament, concerning the duty of the rulers and nation of Israel respecting religion, unto Christian nations and rulers, because the former were under a peculiar law; then we cannot apply what is said in the Old Testament, respecting the judgments denounced against the nation and rulers of Israel, unto Christian nations and their rulers, because the Israelites, as a people, were under a peculiar providence, which

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which constituted a part of their Theocracy. The same distinctions will remove the difficulty in both cases.

The plea that the Jewish rulers were types of Christ, will not prove that the power which they exercised about religion was altogether peculiar, and in no way exemplary. It will not be easily proved that they were all types of Christ, or that the magistratical, or even regal office among that people was typical. Besides, they were types of Christ in acting about civil as well as religious matters. David has usually been considered as a type of Christ in subduing the Philistines, as well as in bringing the ark to Zion; and Solomon, in the wise administration of justice among his people, and in the peace which he granted to them, as well as in building the temple. This suggests another remark, which is commonly overlooked in declamations respecting a typical nation and church. The circumstance of actions being, in one view, typical, is not inconsistent with their being, in another view, moral and exemplary. Joseph may be viewed as a type of Christ, in feeding his father and brethren; but did he not, by the same act, give an eminent example of filial and fraternal affection and duty? While David is viewed as a type of Christ in subduing the enemies of Israel, did he not also discharge a moral duty in defending his subjects? and may not his example be used, to prove that all wars are not unlawful?

Our argument is confirmed, by the consideration that the scripture records approved examples of magistrates who were not Jewish, who exercised their authority for the advancement of religion and the ordinances of God. We find Nebuchadnezzar and Darius publishing decrees to promote the knowledge and worship of the true God among their subjects, and prohibiting them from "speaking any thing "amiss against" him, Dan. iii. 29. iv. vi. 26. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, we have an account of the edicts which several of the Persian monarchs published, in which they not only give permission to rebuild the house of God, and restore his worship in it, but positively favoured

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voured and publicly countenanced the work, and supported those who were engaged in it. These were not typical kings, nor did they exercise their power in virtue of the Jewish constitution.—But we proceed to take notice of some things which refer immediately to the state of religion and the church, under the New Testament.

The true religion is substantially the same in every age; and, notwithstanding accidental changes in outward situation and particular ordinances, the church of God has been essentially the same in every period since her erection. For a long time she appeared principally in the domestic and patriarchal state, afterwards she was advanced to the national state, and since the coming of Christ her boundaries have been enlarged to receive all nations. When her members were "a few men in number, yea very few, when they went "from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another," God "reproved kings for their sakes," and inclined their hearts to protect and favour them. When he had "increased them with men like a flock," and settled them in "the lands of the heathen," he "raised up judges who "delivered them," and rulers, whom he "commanded to "feed them." And, with reference to the times of the New Testament, when "the abundance of the sea shall be converted, and their forces come unto" her, he hath promised, that "kings shall be her nursing fathers;—her officers "peace, and her exactors righteousness." This is connected with 'the advancement of the interests of the mediatorial 'kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is *in*, but not *of* 'this world, and *as* subservient to which the kingdom of 'providence is committed unto him *.' The kingdom of Christ is erected in an external form in the world; and in this respect, as it is subject to injury, restraint, and persecution from the men and powers of the earth, so it is capable of receiving, and stands in need of protection, encouragement, and countenance from them. To these it has a divine

 claim

* The words of the Old *Acknowledgement of Sins*, which have been erased from the new one, now adopted by the Synod.

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claim. Though the institution of civil magistrates is from God 'as *the supreme Lord and king of all the world*,' and not 'properly from Christ *as Mediator*;' yet, 'a right to 'have the kingdoms of this world rendered *subservient and* '*tributary* to his spiritual kingdom, in the visible church, 'belongs to him as Mediator *.' And as he, by his power, in the management of the kingdom of providence committed to him, will bring them into this state; so it is the duty of these kingdoms, and their rulers, to be *actively* 'subser-'vient and tributary' unto his kingdom, by advancing its interests. "The shields of the earth belong unto God," who "is gone up with a shout," and who "reigneth over "the heathen," and he has a right to their service. Psal. xlvii. 9.

In Psalm ii, we have the Father's solemn introduction of Christ, as his King whom he had "set upon his holy "hill of Zion," unto the kings and rulers of the earth, with injunctions to them to serve him in this character. "Be "wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges "of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with "trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye per-"ish from the way," ver. 10,—12. This is an exhortation and command to the rulers, to lay aside that enmity and opposition which they had managed against Christ and his kingdom, and to do homage and service unto him. If the question be asked, In what *character* are they to serve Christ? It may be answered by proposing another, In what character did they *oppose* him? Was it not in their *public* character, as rulers? "The kings of the earth set them-"selves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the "Lord and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their "bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," ver. 2, 3. "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings," &c. Shall we suppose, when they are reprehended in their public character for opposing Christ, that the exhortation to "serve" him respects merely their private character as individuals? Shall not the honour and homage to be paid to God's

* Display, vol. i. p. 333.

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God's own King, be as conspicuous and decided as the ignominy which was poured upon him was? The words of a father of the church have been generally quoted upon this subject: 'As a man he serves God in one way, but as a 'king in another. As a man he serves him by a faithful 'life, as a king by laws commanding what is right, and forbidding the contrary. In this therefore do kings serve 'the Lord, as kings, when they do those things for his service which none but kings can do *.'—'It is the unanimous 'opinion of divines (says *Walæus*, in a treatise against Erastian tenets), that the declaration of the Royal prophet, (Psal. 'ii.) is applicable to kings under the New Testament; "now "therefore, kings, be wise, &c;" that is, yield obedience, 'and that not merely as other members of the church, but '*chiefly* as kings and supreme judges †.'—'Judges and 'rulers, AS SUCH, must "kiss the Son" (says Dr Owen, in 'his sermon preached before the Parliament of England), 'and own his sceptre, and advance his ways. Some think, 'if you were well settled, you ought not, *as rulers of the* '*nation*, to put forth your *power* for the interest of Christ. 'The good Lord keep your hearts from that apprehension!' As this view of the words is agreeable to the concurrent judgment of the most judicious interpreters, so it is necessarily suggested by the scope of the whole psalm, which relates to the public state of the kingdom of Christ; by the characters addressed, their being in the same station with those mentioned in the beginning; and by the judgments threatened for non-compliance with the injunction. Indeed, the exposition which confines this, and similar texts, to the private character and conduct of rulers, would not be borne

 with

* 'Aliter enim servit qua homo, aliter quia etiam et Rex est. Qua homo 'est, ei servit vivendo fideliter; quia vero etiam Rex est servit leges justa præ-'cipientes, et contraria prohibentes. In hoc ergo serviunt Domino reges, in 'quantum sunt reges, cum ea faciunt ad serviendum illi quæ non possunt facere 'nisi Reges.' Augustin. Epist. 50. ad Bonif. comit. circa med.

† 'Unanimis ergo hæc est Theologorum sententia, competere nimirum Re-'gibus N. Testamenti (ut monit David, Psal. ii.) hanc Regii Prophetæ senten-'tiam, *Nunc ergo*, &c. id est,—obedientiam præstate, nec tantum, ut reliquæ Ecclesiæ membra, sed imprimis ut Reges et supremi Judices.' Wallæi Oper. Tom. ii p. 35.

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with, if applied unto any other persons in authority, as ministers, parents, &c.

What is enjoined upon rulers by divine precept, God promises they shall perform, in the way of homage to the Redeemer, and service to his church. In Psalm lxxii. we have a remarkable prophecy relative to the extent and glory of the kingdom of Christ. Among other things, the subjection and service of the nations, and their rulers, are particularly mentioned, "The kings of Tarshish and of the "isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba "shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before "him; all nations shall serve him," ver. 10. 11. The "presents and gifts," here mentioned, refer to the custom of princes who paid tribute to those kings who had conquered them, or to whose authority they owned subjection, while they reigned as princes over their own subjects. Solomon had many kings and kingdoms who were tributary to him, and who sent presents, and performed services to him in this view. Read 1 Kings iv. 21. 2 Chron. ix. 26. These strikingly illustrate the promises here made to Christ. Whether, with some, we shall suppose that this psalm refers in the first place to Solomon as the type, and ultimately to Christ as the antitype; or rather, with others, that it refers immediately to Christ, but describes the glory and extent of his kingdom in the way of continued allusion to that of Solomon; the illustration is in either view the same. It shews that kings, in their *kingly state*, should fall down before him, that nations, in their *national state*, should serve him*; and exposes the foolish, not to say 'wicked import 'of the New-scheme,' which would limit the whole meaning to individual conduct, and the character of church-members †,

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* Display, vol. ii. p. 405.

† 'Fructus, qui ex conversione Regum, et magnatum ad Ecclesiam redit '(says Gerhard on this passage), non solum in eo consistit, quod *exemplo* suo, &c. 'i. e. The fruit which arises from the conversion of kings and princes to the 'church, does not consist in this only, that they provoke others by their *exam-'ple* to embrace the gospel of Christ; but also, because they bring their sub-'jects to Christ; afford a hospitable abode to the church in their dominions, 'and, by their *authority*, promote the propagation of the gospel,' Gerhardi (Johannis) Loc. Theolog. Tom. vii. p. 578.

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We have an additional promise to this purpose in Isa. xlix. 23. "And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and "their queens thy nursing-mothers; they shall bow down to "thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the "dust of thy feet, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; "for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me." To which may be added, chap. lx. 10, 12, 16. "And the sons "of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall "minister unto thee; for in my wrath I smote thee, but in "my favour have I had mercy on thee. For the nation "and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish; yea, "those nations shall be utterly wasted. Thou shalt also "suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast "of kings, and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy "Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob." Concerning these promises it may be briefly remarked. 1. That they have a place among the most precious promises, which are made to the church as testimonies of the singular favour of God unto her, in comforting and honouring her after the afflictions and disgrace to which she had been subjected; and they are connected with her great increase and prosperity; external and spiritual. This will appear from a perusal of the context in both chapters, and ought to prevent any from looking upon the subject as of little importance. 2. While the promises refer to the period of the New Testament, there is an allusion to what took place under the Old, particularly in the countenance and aid that were afforded by the Persian kings, in the restoration of the temple and its worship. "The sons of "strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall "minister unto them." Some, indeed, view the prophecy as accomplished in what took place at the return from the Babylonish captivity; but, upon better grounds, the most judicious interpreters consider it as referring to the church under the New Testament, as receiving a begun accomplishment in the time of Constantine, when the Christian church first obtained the countenance and support of the civil powers,

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ers, and a more full accomplishment in the protestant churches after the reformation from antichristianism, and in the glory yet to be expected *. 3. These promises secure unto the church the public countenance of kings and kingdoms as such. *Kings shall be* her *nursing-fathers; nations* and *kingdoms shall serve* her. The authority and means competent unto them as such shall be employed on the side of the church, and for the advancement of the true religion; whereas they had formerly been employed against her, and for the support of a false religion. To limit the sense of the words to that *common protection* which is given to all subjects, and to any society, is to explain away the promises of God †. Kings shall act as *nursing fathers*, as *curators*, or *tutors* (as some render the words), who exercise a special care and oversight over the orphans who are committed to them; or, as the metaphor is elsewhere illustrated, "carrying them in their bosom, as a nursing-father "beareth the sucking-child," Numb. xi. 12. It is equally unreasonable to confine the meaning of the promise to the private or personal conduct of rulers, and of their subjects. This would never suggest itself to any who, in reading the passage, had not formed the notion that the church cannot be benefited by civil power. It offers violence to the plain meaning of the words. It does not accord with the context, which speaks of the public state of the church, and those means which tend to advance its interests in this view. It entirely sets aside the analogy between what is predicted and what had formerly taken place, which is suggested by the description. It does not correspond to what God actually did for his church at the period to which the promises refer. It gives an improper sense to the words, in opposition to what is intimated in the divine threatening against those who shall refuse service to his church: for "the na-"tion and kingdom" (as such, and not merely individuals of them),

* Vitringa in loca.

† 'The protection of their civil peace is not sufficient to give them such a 'denomination of *nursing fathers* and *mothers*.' Burroughs on Heart-divisions, p. 25.

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them), " that will not serve" her, " shall perish,—shall be " utterly wasted," chap. lx. 12. In fine, this view is contrary to that of the most judicious interpreters. 'The 'Hebrew word (says Wallæus, in the treatise formerly 'mentioned) which is rendered *nurse*, is from the root *aman*, 'and properly signifies to *strengthen*, to *establish*. There-'fore the breasts of kings and queens, which the church 'sucks, are nothing else than the *authority and power of* '*magistrates*, by which the church of Christ is strengthened; 'as the child is by the milk of the nurse *.' 'The Church 'is compared (says Rivet) to orphans and pupils, whose 'tutelage and guardianship it is the magistrates duty to un-'dertake, which certainly he cannot do, if, in his adminis-'tration, he is excluded from all care of religion †.'—'These 'promises (says Dr Owen) assert, that magistrates shall 'put forth their *power* for the welfare of the church. 'Kingdoms are said to serve the church: and how can a 'kingdom, *as* a kingdom, serve the church, but as putting 'forth *its power* and strength in *her* behalf? What God 'hath promised, kings, magistrates, rulers, nations shall 'do, that is their duty to do.—Surely these promises will 'scarcely be accomplished in bringing commonwealths to be 'of Gallio's frame, to take care for none of these things ‡.' The same is the opinion of that celebrated commentator on Isaiah, *Vitringa*, whose judgment ought to have the greater weight, as he is allowed to be sufficiently attentive to evangelical and spiritual interpretations of the Old Testament. His views of these promises, as far as they respect the present subject, we shall therefore give more largely in the note ||.

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* 'Nam vox Hebrea, quæ vertitur *nutricius* est ex radice, aman, et significat 'proprie *roborare, stabilire*. Mammæ itaque Regum et Reginarum, quas sugit, 'nihil aliud sunt, quam auctoritas et potestas magistratus, qua Ecclesia 'Christi roboratur, non secus ac fœtus lacte nutricis.' Walæi Oper. Tom. II. 36.

† 'Comparatur Ecclesia orphanis et pupillis quorum tutelam et patrocinium 'suscipere debet ejus Magistratus; quod certe facere non potest, si ab omni 'Religionis cura ejus administratio removeatur,' Riveti Oper. Tom. i. p. 1374.

‡ Owen's Sermon, *ut supra*.

|| The *hand of God*, and *the standard* which he is said to *lift up* to the Gentiles,

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We might have urged here, that the whole tenor of the declarations, promises, and predictions of the Old Testament,

tiles, ch. xlix. 22. Vitringa explains as referring to 'the EDICTS of the *Emperors*, 'particularly of Constantine, after the removal of Licinius, by which EDICTS, 'the people were obliged to supply the necessities of the church, and to pro-'mote her interests.' And he quotes the words of Eusebius, to prove the effect which these had in gathering persons to the church. The promise in verse 23. 'teaches (he says), that about this time, 1. Kings and queens should take care 'of, nourish and cherish the church, and promote her increase, which those 'who do, are said to act as *nurses* to the church. For *milk* is the *means* of in-'crease. 2. That the same persons should treat in a kind and loving manner, 'and supply the necessities of the church, both in her ministers and members, 'and among the rest those who were poor, needy, and helpless. 3. That, in 'addition to this, the kings themselves, princes, queens, and illustrious matrons, 'should demonstrate and explain the salutary doctrine of truth to others, ex-'horting and comforting them, &c.—If you turn to the time of Constantine, and 'those which followed (adds he) all is clear. We ourselves, and Christians 'who live under the *government* of pious princes of both sexes, or of either 'sex, do, by the grace of God, see and experience what is here said. It appears 'that Kings, and illustrious Ladies, not those mentioned only, but many others, 'from the time of Constantine, began to nourish and cherish the church, pro-'moted her increase, advanced her interests by their *Edicts* as well as their 'example; builded places of worship for her use; granted immunities to her 'ministers from public burdens; appointed stipends to them from the *public* 'treasury,' &c. He is still more express on the corresponding passage in chap. lx. 10. 'Such as are Princes and Nobles (says he), shall protect and promote 'religion; shall honour and cherish her ministers; procure necessary support 'for her schools and seminaries; defend and agent the cause of the church; 'and without offering violence to consciences, shall, according to the rule of the 'gospel, employ *their* AUTHORITY and means for the increase and enlargement 'of the church.' And on ver. 16. "thou shalt suck the breasts of kings" he says 'The simple meaning is, that Kings shall convert their *power*, *authority*, *wealth*, 'care, to the cherishing, nourishing, and guarding of the church. *Milk* here 'denotes every thing belonging to kings which is fitted to cherish, nourish, 'support, and comfort the church.'

'Verum peculiari sensu affirmo per *manum Dei* et *signum* ejus publice elatum, ad quod populi et gentes concurrerent ad Ecclesiæ incrementum ac profectum pro virili curandum, esse intelligenda EDICTA Imperatorum, et post sublatum quoque Licinium, solius Constantini: per quæ *edicta* populi obligati fuerunt ad subveniendum necessitatibus Ecclesiæ, et res illius promovendas. Emblema docet, circa hoc tempus, fore. 1. Ut *Reges* ac *Principes fœminæ* Ecclesiam curent, nutrient, foveant, et incrementa ejus promoveant; quod qui faciunt, dicuntur Ecclesiam nutrire. Lac enim est medium incrementi. 2. Ut iidem Ecclesiam, ejusque ministros, et membra quoque, et in his pauperes, egenos, inopes, blande atque amanter tractent, eorumque necessitatibus provideant. 3. Subinde etiam ipsi Reges, principes, reginæ ac matronæ illustres, doctrinam veritatis salutarem aliis demonstrant, explicent, alios exhortentur, consolentur.—Sed si te convertas ad tempus Constantini, et sequentia: omnia liquida sunt. Nos et ipsi, et Christiani sub piorum principum utriusque aut alterutrius sexus *regimine* degentes, quod hic dicetur, per Dei gratiam videmus et sentimus. Constat, Reges et matrones illustres, non has illas, sed plures et plurimas, ab tempore Constantini, Ecclesiam Christi Jesu incepisse nutrire et fovere, quatenus

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ment, lead to the conclusion that Christianity shall be owned, countenanced, and supported, in a *national* way. God addresses the nations in a collective capacity, reproves them for their idolatry, and calls them to his worship, Isa. xxxiv. 1. xli. 1, 21,—29. He proposes Christ, as his anointed servant, to them, chap. xlii. 1.; declares that he has given him the nations for his inheritance, and that he shall inherit them all, Psal. ii. 8. lxxxii. 8. Isa. lii. 15. lv. 5. Christ addresses himself not only to individuals, but to whole islands, Isa. xlix. 1.; nations join themselves to him, own and worship him, Isa. ii. 2. Mic. iv. 1, 2. Zech. ii. 11. viii. 20,—22. bless themselves, and glory in him, Jer. iv. 2.; all nations and dominions serve him, Dan. vii. 14, 27. they consecrate all things in them, and employ them in his service, Isa. lx. 6,—12. Zech. xiv. 20, 21.; he owns these nations as his, and blesses them, while he breaks in pieces and wastes others, Psal. xxxiii. 12. cxlv. 15. Isa. xix. 25. Psal. ii. 9, 12. Isa. lx. 12 *.

It is commonly pleaded that there is nothing in the New Testament which countenances a national religion, or proves that magistrates, as such, have any concern with the interests of religion and the church of Christ; and those who

ejus incrementa promoverunt, et sive *Edictis* suis sive exempla commoda ejus curarunt, Oratoria et Basilica in ejus usum extruxerunt; clericos ab oneribus publicis immunes esse voluerunt; stipendia iis ex fisco statuerant. Comment. in Ies. xlix. 23. Qui Principes ac Proceres religionem protegent ac promovent; ministros ejus honeste habent foventque; subsidia necessaria, procurant scholis ac Seminariis ejus; ecclesiam defendunt causamque ejus agunt; et, absque vi illata conscientus, secundum canonem legis Evangelicæ autoritatem facultatesque suas vertunt ad Ecclesiæ incrementum et amplificationem.—Sensus simplex est, Reges suam potentiam, auctoritatem, opes, curam, conversuros esse ad Ecclesiam fovendam, nutriendam, curandam. Lac hic notat omne quod Regum et in Regibus est, ad ecclesiam fovendam, nutriendam, sustinendam, consolandam, aptam.' Comment. in cap. lx. 10, 16.

* The force of the argument arising from these and similar promises and predictions is such that *Mr Edward Williams*, although an Indepenent, acknowledges that they imply a national profession and establishment of Christianity. In answer to the objection, 'If the above prophecies refer to *national conversions*, 'does not that lead to *national churches*,' he replies, 'That a national establish-'ment, if WELL ORDERED, appears more agreeable to the prophetic passsages 'we have been considering than the Anti-pædobaptist plan; nay, more agree-'able to the general tenor of revelation.' Williams's *Anti-pædobaptism Examined*, vol. i. p. 273.

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maintain this are often triumphantly asked to produce a proof of it from the New Testament. This plea is neither relevant nor well founded.—It is irrelevant. For if the Old Testament is a rule of faith and manners to us, as well as the New, it is sufficient that what we plead for is warranted by the former, although it should not be expressly mentioned in the latter *. We have shewed that the power in question is warranted by the Old Testament, and that it records approved examples of its exercise which proceeded upon moral grounds. Those who affirm that it is abrogated, or has ceased, under the New Testament, must produce proof of this. 'We deny that it is, our adversaries in this 'matter must affirm that it is; otherwise, they do not so 'much as enter into the question in controversy. And it is 'incumbent on those who take the affirmative side of a ques-'tion to prove their assertion, (*Affirmanti incumbit probatio*). 'It is contrary to the rules of just reasoning to tell us, that 'we cannot instruct the warrantableness of the magistrate's power about religion, 'unless we produce a positive in-'stitution of it in the New Testament, if the whole word 'of God be the rule of our faith and practice †.'—The apostle declares, that "rulers are not a terror to good "works, but to the evil." Both by the law of nature and the law revealed in the Old Testament, magistrates had power to restrain and punish evil works, against the first as well as the second table of the law. Let those who affirm, that the magistrate's power is, under the gospel, restricted to the second, prove their assertion. The same apostle asserts, that the magistrate is "the minister of God—for good." We

* The magistrate's power and duty respecting religion is not pleaded for by Presbyterians as a positive institution of Christ, or of the Christian church. That there are duties and rights, religious as well as moral, which are not explicitely commanded or exemplified in the New Testament, is proved by the writers in defence of the morality of the Sabbath, Infant Baptism, and Covenanting. Walker's Sermon, p. 67. and Examination of Hutchison's Animadversions, p. 27, 82. Caudrey and Palmer's Sabbatum Redivivum, Chap. ii.

† Morison's Present Duty, p. 50. The Author uses this reasoning with reference to *Covenanting;* but it is equally applicable to the present subject. There were peculiarities as to Covenanting under the Old Testament, as well as the magistrate's power. See New Testimony, p. 196. at the top.

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We have seen, that by the law of nature and the Old Testament, he is bound, as such, to maintain the honour of God, and to countenance religious institutions for the good of his subjects. Let it be proved that this has been abrogated, or is inconsistent with the gospel dispensation.—'Besides we have already shewed that there are manifold passages to this purpose in the Old Testament, evidently respecting New Testament times. If any will not believe the Old Testament to be obligatory upon us, even wherein it has a declared respect to New Testament times, they may with equal reason deny both *.'

But neither is the plea well founded. It is true that the New Testament does not give express commands or directions to Magistrates as such, either as to civil or religious matters; the apostles, in their epistles, inculcating chiefly the duties incumbent upon Christians in those stations in which they were at that time placed. Any thing this way is to be found connected with the duties incumbent upon Christians to rulers. The apostle, 2 Tim. ii. 1. exhorts, that prayers be made by Christians "for kings, and for all that "are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable "life in all godliness and honesty." What Christians are here to pray for, that magistrates must be bound to promote as their end; and this is not simply "a quiet and peaceable "life," but "in all godliness and honesty." Rulers are not, in their official capacity, to be indifferent to *godliness* any more than to *honesty;* both are to be countenanced and promoted by them, Ezra vi. 8,—10.

The New Testament also contains, as well as the Old, predictions and promises which confirm what we maintain. When the seventh angel sounded, "there were great voices "in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become "*the kingdoms* of our Lord and of his Christ," Rev. xi. 15. This refers to the period of the Reformation from Popery, and includes, besides other things, the public state and actings of these kingdoms with reference to the religion of Je-

* Present Duty, p. 58.

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sus Christ. 'On the accomplishment of the promises' formerly mentioned (says Dr Owen) kingdoms 'are said 'to become the kingdoms of the Lord Christ,' Rev. xi. 15. 'because, *as* kingdoms, they serve him with their power 'and authority.—There is not the least colour left, for 'turning off and rejecting all these promises,' as if they were 'merely metaphorical, shadowing forth spiritual glo-'ries; neither their beginning nor ending will bear any 'such corrupting interpretation *.' They had formerly been the kingdoms of Antichrist, not merely by having his ordinances set up in them, by the greater part of the people submitting to these, but by a public and national acknowledgement of his authority, and subjection to him. But they should now acknowledge, and submit to the Lord. Their kings had formerly given their power to the beast; but now they should withdraw it, and employ it on the side of the Lamb †.—Again, in describing the glory of the church in the latter days, it is said, "the kings of the earth "did bring their glory and honour into it,—and they shall "bring the glory and honour of the nations into it," Rev. xxi. 24, 26. The following is the explication of that passage by a commentator formerly quoted: 'Then also 'Princes, Kings, Emperors, shall serve Christ and his 'church, shall bring their *glory*, *majesty*, *and power* into it; 'that is, shall convert them to her use and advantage: They 'shall publicly celebrate the true religion, honour its 'ministers, and by their authority and power maintain and 'defend the same; which the church hath already experien-'ced in part from the time of Constantine, and lately from 'the period of the Reformation; and partly has yet to look 'for. There is a reference here to Isa. lx. 10, 11. and xlix. '22, 25. It appears very clearly from this place that this 'vision

* Owen's Sermon, ut spura.

† 'It imports their becoming Christ's, as formerly they had been Antichrist's, As the Nations, under Antichrist, did acknowledge and submit to Antichrist in a National way; so shall they as solemnly reject Antichrist, and take Christ in his room, and become his people in a National capacity.' Willison's Defence, p. 53. See also Durham on the Revelation, p. 527. edit. Glas. 1788.

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'vision refers to the state of the church on earth.—Pious 'princes and kings, in the state of perfection, shall not 'bring their glory to her, but shall *receive* it. The titles 'and external prerogatives, which distinguish men in civil 'and sacred societies, shall be there abolished.' And on ver. 16. he says, 'The meaning is, that whatever is emi-'nent, beautiful, splendid, or praise-worthy among the na-'tions, shall be consecrated to the use of the church of 'Christ. The command of wealth and of earthly preroga-'tives, the gifts of erudition, prudence, eloquence; the dig-'nity of Nobles, the majesty of Kings and Princes, shall 'promote the interests of the church *.'

It is readily granted that many specious objections may be started against this, as well as every other truth and duty. And when great industry is used to misrepresent it, and these objections are urged by multitudes from different quarters, and by those to whom persons look up as teachers, they may gain an easy and general belief. But, if we are to be staggered in our belief of every thing, against which difficulties may be raised, upon which persons can declaim with great ease, assurance, and plausibility, we may reject the most important articles of religion and revelation.—It is only a very short and general answer to the most popular objections on this subject that we can overtake at present.

It is objected, That the power in question is very liable to be abused, has been abused in all ages; and that, if we give power to magistrates about religion, they will employ it for the support of a false religion as well as the true.—This is an objection which has the greatest influence upon the ignorant,

* Vitringa in Apocalypsin, p. 1215—16. 'Tum quoque Principes, Reges, Imperatores, Christo et Ecclesiæ ejus servituri, suam gloriam, majestatem, vires in eam inferrent; hoc est, in ejus converterent usum utilitatemque: Religionem veram publice celebraturi, ejusque honoraturi ministros, suaque auctoritate et potentia eidem patrocinaturi, quod jam partem vidit ecclesia a temporibus Constantini, &c.—Sensus est, quicquid inter Gentes eximium, pulchrum, splendidum, laude dignum habitur, consecrandum esse usibus Ecclesiæ Christi. Facultates bonorum et prærogativarum terrestrium; dotes eruditionis, prudentiæ, eloquentiæ; dignitas Magnatum, majestas Regum et Principum, Ecclesiæ servient utilitatibus.'

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ignorant, and is accordingly most frequently urged, and represented with all possible aggravations. It will not however bear examination. *Ab abusa ad usum not valet consequentia. It is not just reasoning, to argue from the* ABUSE *of any thing, against its* USE. What power is there among fallible and corrupt men which is not liable to be abused, greatly abused, which has not been abused in every age, which is not daily abused by many. Some kinds of power may be more liable to be abused than others, or, when abused, may be productive of worse consequences *. *Corruptio optimi, pessima,* is a common maxim; *the corruption of the best things is the worst.* Shall we therefore abolish and reject these altogether on account of their abuse? It is well known that the power committed by Christ to the office-bearers of his church has been very grossly abused. Great and highly culpable as the encroachments of civil rulers upon the prerogatives of Christ and the consciences of men have been and are, let us not forget that the greatest enemy on earth that ever the church of Christ saw, or will see, was a power not civil, but *spiritual* or *ecclesiatiscal*, "sitting in the temple of God," which, principally by claims of a spiritual kind, rose to such a surprising ascendancy, as to "exalt himself above all that is called God, or "that is worshipped," and during so many ages usurped the supremacy of Jesus Christ, the prerogatives of princes, and the rights of mankind. It is not uncommon with many, from this abuse, to declaim against and decry all church-power, and Presbyterian courts in particular, as proceeding upon the same principles, and liable to similar abuses. This is unreasonable. And it is equally unreasonable to confound the power allotted by Presbyterians to Magistrates, with that

* Such an objection must come with a bad grace from those who have said, respecting a right which they are afraid to plead for *as moral:* 'They *may* 'and OFTEN do err and offend the most high God, by substituting a false 'worship in the place of that which he requires: but no power on earth may 'take their right from them.' New Testimony, p. 195. What we plead for is a *moral right*, which gives no countenance to abuses, and leaves unimpaired all those means which are proper for correcting or restraining these, as committed against the law of God and the good of society.

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that which has been claimed or exercised by persecuting, tyrannical, Popish or Erastian governments; or to discard the exercise of civil authority about religion, when duly limited, from a dread of the wildest excesses which have been committed by the rage of tyranny, bigotry, or fanaticism. There is no more affinity between these, than there is between the legitimate principles of government or of necessary defence, and the numerous unjust wars, massacres, rapine, and oppression, which have been practised in all ages by nations and their rulers.—The misapplication of civil power to the support of a false religion, is common to it with all other power among men. The true religion must still continue to have the only just claim to support, although its rivals may often supplant it; nor are we to go over to the camp of *scepticism*, by representing it as impossible to distinguish between truth and falsehood in the matter. The objection drawn from abuse was as strong against the power of the Jewish kings *.

But it is objected, That the principle itself involves, or necessarily leads to persecution. For if magistrates have a power about religion, they must also have a right to punish those who do not comply with what they enact, command, or prohibit, in these matters. When they make laws ratifying a particular profession of faith, form of worship, &c. does it not follow that they have a right to secure obedience to these by civil penalties, in the way of making their subjects to profess and worship accordingly?—To this we answer, That there are many things here confounded which are essentially distinct, both as to religion and the operation of laws. There are various actions of men about religion, respecting which magistratical authority may be justly employed

* 'We do not deny (says Dr Rivet) that by the abuse of this power, the 'church may be disturbed, and the true worship of God overturned; which 'also happens from the abuse of the ecclesiastical power. In the kingdom of 'Judah, within a very short space, king Ahaz burned incense in the high-'places; what his son Hezekiah abolished, Manasseh restored, which Josiah 'his grandson again destroyed. But these changes did not derogate from the 'Regal power in matters of religion; nor do we ever hear that the prophets 'contended against this power, although they, in the name of God, severely 'reproved the abuses of it.' Oper. Tom. i. p. 1375.

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ployed in the way of restraint and punishment. Such as blasphemy, the open contempt of religion, or even of Christianity and the Bible, in Christian states, the profanatio of the name of God, of divine ordinances, and of the Sabbath. These and similar practices, we are of opinion, magistrates, in virtue of their office, may restrain or punish, according as the nature of the offence and the good of society may require, without being chargeable with any persecution.

But it will not follow from this, or from any regulations and restrictions which may be necessary in the reformation or settlement of religion in a nation, that magistrates are warranted forcibly to impose a profession of faith upon their subjects, or to oblige them to worship God in a certain mode, under civil penalties to be inflicted upon all who dissent or refuse compliance. Nor is any thing of this kind necessarily implied in laws which recognise, establish, and support, a particular profession of Christianity and church-state. It is of no avail to plead here, that the magistrate's power is compulsory, and that, if it be interposed at all about religion, it must ultimately force it, as a compulsory power must always be supposed at hand to secure respect to the law. We readily grant that the magistrates power is compulsory, and that a compulsory power is employed about religion. But the question is, *How* is this power employed, and upon *whom* does the penalty fall? Is it employed in compelling men to believe, profess, worship, &c. and in punishing those who may think, profess, or act in any way different from the national establishment? This is what we deny, and what ought to be proved as a necessary consequent. It is so, indeed, with those laws which are intended to gain the end, directly and immediately, by their own influence. But it is quite otherwise with those laws which are intended to accomplish the ends by the intervention of institutions, and means adapted unto them. In this case, the law is directly employed in sanctioning, securing, providing for the public support and maintenance

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maintenance of these institutions; and the penalty falls upon those who shall attempt, in a factious, disorderly, or turbulent manner, to prevent their being carried into execution, or to interrupt, hinder, disturb, or overturn them. This is the case with many of those laws which are calculated to promote religion, morality, education, arts and sciences, with other things connected with the public good of a nation. Those must be strangers to the operation of government, who do not know how many laws are enacted, and carried into execution from time to time, for promoting public improvements and institutions, where neither the private judgment nor public conduct of men are controuled, with respect to any thing necessarily connected with true liberty. When laws are enacted for promoting certain arts and sciences, a compulsory power is employed about them. But are men forced to become artizans and philosophers? or are these things promoted by fines and imprisonments? When laws are enacted for promoting education, and for erecting schools and colleges, as seminaries of national instruction, sanctioning their internal regulations, endowing them, and granting them certain immunities and privileges, a compulsory power is in like manner employed. It is the same as to an establishment of religion. A compulsory power is exercised in various ways about the established church of Scotland; but is it by compelling all to become members of that church, or inflicting penalties upon those who dissent? When a particular profession, or confession of faith, form of worship and ecclesiastical government, obtain the formal sanction of civil authority, they are recognised by the legislature, as declaratory of that religion which obtains the national countenance and support, and according unto which the legal privileges and emoluments appropriated for this purpose are to be conferred and enjoyed. But this by no means implies that all shall be obliged, under civil pains, to conform unto this establishment, or be punished for dissenting from it.—There is a wide and essential distinction between *the exercise of a compulsive power*

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about religion, and *compulsion in religion*. Yet there are *Masters in Israel*, who can magisterially decide this controversy, without having learned its *first principles*, or attending to the most necessary distinctions on the subject!

It is further objected, That magistrates, by sanctioning the laws of Christ, or by enacting laws respecting religion, encroach upon his prerogatives, as the sole King and legislator of his church, and the rights of his independent kingdom.—We answer, that rulers, both civil and ecclesiastical, may invade, and have invaded the prerogatives of Christ. But that this is necessarily implied in the exercise of civil authority, in advancing the interests of religion and the kingdom of Christ, we deny. The objection proceeds upon a confounding of those authorities which are of the same kind, with that which is subordinate. When the subordinate authority recognises the laws of the supreme, and is employed within its own sphere in setting them forward, and making provision for their being carried into execution, instead of invading, it acknowledges and does homage unto that authority. When magistrates make laws for preventing the profanation, and promoting the observance and sanctification of the Sabbath, they do not pretend to give additional authority to the divine command, nor do they usurp the prerogatives of him who is "Lord of the Sab-"bath." The Lord was the lawgiver and king of his church under the Old Testament as well as he is under the New, and he was as jealous of his honour then as now. It was his royal will and command that the temple should be rebuilt, and he claims this as his prerogative: "Thus "saith the Lord thy Redeemer,—that saith to Jerusalem, "Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, thou "shalt be built," Isa. xliv. 24, 26. But was it inconsistent with this for Cyrus to issue his royal mandate to the same purpose? Let the following words declare:—"That saith "of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my "pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; "and to the temple, thy foundation shall be laid, ver. 28.

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In such cases, the law *of God*, and the law *of the king*, are not inconsistent with each other, the one is subordinate to the other; and a respect is due to both. "We will build "(said the Jews) unto the Lord God of Israel, as king "Cyrus, the king of Persia, hath commanded us.—And "they builded and finished it, according to the command-"ment of the God of Israel, and according to the command-"ment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Per-"sia," Ezra. iv. 3. vi. 14.

But it is objected, That the kingdom of Christ is wholly of a spiritual and heavenly nature; and cannot be promoted by secular power. In proof of this we are referred to our Lord's declaration: "My kingdom is not of this world," John xviii. 36.—Those must surely have read or thought superficially upon this subject, who imagine that this declaration determines the present controversy. The kingdom of Christ, though spiritual and heavenly, and different from the kingdoms of this world, in its origin, laws, immediate objects and ends, has still, in various respects, a connection with the things of this world, as visibly erected in it, and is capable of standing in a friendly relation with earthly kingdoms, and of receiving benefit from them. Has not the church external privileges, which are capable of being secured? Has she not external ordinances, assemblies, courts, &c. which need to be celebrated and held? Are there not various means and encouragements of an external and worldly nature, which she needs, and is capable of receiving, by which religious knowledge may be more extensively diffused, and the dispensation of all divine ordinances maintained? And may she not receive the countenance and aid of civil government in all these, and in similar respects *?

* 'There will be still something earthly in the church (says Mr Willison of 'Dundee) as long as she is upon the earth. Seeing then there is still some-'thing *earthly*, and which needeth *earthly supports*, even in the gospel-church, 'I would fain know, why she is not capable' of receiving favour and assistance from the 'Magistrate, with respect to that *earthly part*, as well as the church 'of *Israel*? Have not her Ministers bodies and families, which need meat, 'drink,

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But it is objected, That the Christian church did not enjoy the assistance of the civil power during the first three centuries. If this had been such a benefit, God would certainly have conferred it upon her. Besides, she flourished as long as she was without it, but became corrupt as soon as she received it.—We answer, that it does not become us to prescribe to God, with respect to "the times and the "seasons" at which he shall confer any blessing which he has promised. He discovers his sovereignty in this matter, and has wise reasons for his conduct, of which we may be left in ignorance, or which we may overlook. The possession of the land of Canaan was promised, as an eminent blessing, to the seed of Abraham; but it was hundreds of years before he actually bestowed it upon them. They "so-"journed in the land of promise as in a strange country, "dwelling in tabernacles." Even when "the time of the pro-"mise drew nigh, and the people multiplied," they were kept under the iron rod of persecution, and were made to pass through the waste and howling wilderness; nor did they fail to abuse the pleasant land and quiet habitation, after they were put in possession of it.—Besides, it is easy to perceive, that, if there is any force in the objection, it may be retorted. It cannot be denied that there are promises given to the church respecting godly kings and magistrates. Now, in whatever sense these are explained, it may be asked, If these were to be of so great advantage to

'drink, sleep, cloathing, lodging and protection, as well as the *Jewish* priests? 'Hath she not external ordinances, which need outward accommodations, com-'munion elements and utensils, with houses, tables and seats for her assem-'blies? Does she not need schools for educating the youth, with maintenance 'to these schools? Now, if the magistrate, as a *kind nursing-father*, shall con-'tribute his assistance to provide these necessaries for the gospel church; is it 'not a strange imagination, to fancy that this doth change her nature, or turn 'her to an earthly church, or kingdom of this world?—Will any man say, 'that this kind assistance doth lessen her spirituality? Nay, doth it not rather 'add thereto, in regard that spiritual instruction and gospel-preaching is here-'by increased and spread over all the land.—Again, is not a stipend contri-'buted by private hands as much a *worldly encouragement* as one appointed by 'the Magistrate? Nay, sometimes the one may be a far greater worldly en-'couragement than the other.' Willison's Defence of National Churches, p. 225,—227.

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to the church, why did not God give them at the beginning of Christianity? There were other means besides civil power, which God declined to employ in the propagation of the gospel. Human learning, though lawful in itself, and capable of being improved for the advancement of Christianity, was overlooked. God did choose "the "foolish things of the world to confound the wise," as well as the "weak things of the world to confound the "mighty;" and he adopted this method, to give a signal demonstration that the gospel was from heaven, and that its propagation throughout the world, not only without the aid of, but in spite of the most determined opposition from the united efforts of human wit and power, was the work of his own hand. Because the persons whom Christ chose at first to propagate the gospel among the nations, and the greater part of the pastors of the primitive church, were "unlearned men;" because religion flourished greatly at that time; or because the introduction of human learning into the church brought along with it many corruptions,—shall we adopt *another* Sectarian error, maintain that human learning is altogether useless, if not pernicious to the church, and abolish our colleges and halls of Divinity? The one is not more unreasonable than the other.

Nor is it a fact that the church continued to flourish always until she obtained the support of the civil powers; or that this was the first and sole cause of her corruption. The spirit of Antichrist did long before work; numerous errors prevailed; superstitions of different kinds had crept in; a spirit of pride and ambition had discovered itself among the governors of the church; bishops had exalted themselves above the presbyters; and the government of the church was, previously to this, much altered from what it had been in the days of the apostles. That the enjoyment of external peace and prosperity, and the countenance of the civil powers among other things contributed, or were abused to the increase of these evils, who can doubt? That the Christian Emperors, in the favours which they conferred on the church,

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church, acted in many instances injudiciously, we readily grant; their donations to the bishops were excessive, and tended to cherish a spirit of secular ambition and grandeur; and the alterations which were soon introduced into the external form and government of the church, raised that hierarchy by which the "man of sin" attained his great ascendancy. But we must not confound the abuse of this power with its due use, as far as it took place; not only in granting freedom from persecution (which the Christians had enjoyed at intervals under Pagan emperors), but in the public settlement of the laws on the side of Christianity, the decided countenance given unto it by government, with the encouragements conducive to the spread of the gospel, and the maintenance of the institutions of Jesus Christ, which it bestowed. This distinction is carefully observed in the intimations of prophecy, with reference to this event. The overthrow of the pagan form of the Roman empire, with the conversion of its authority to the support of Christianity, is there celebrated as the triumph of the gospel, the coming of "the kingdom of God," the casting down of Satan from heaven, and the exaltation of the church to that place which he had occupied, Rev. xii. 5, 8,—10 *. Although Satan, enraged at being deprived of his authority, attacked the church in another way, and employed the very privileges now

* 'This, shortly, is fulfilled (says Mr Durham) when, after heathenish persecution for three hundred years had prevailed, Christians were advanced, 'Constantine being made emperor, and Christianity was established by a law. '—It is as the witnesses were taken to heaven, chap. xi. 12. That was, by a 'public authorised church condition and state, after Antichrist's persecution; 'so here, religion authoritatively is established, which never was before, and 'Christians countenanced after heathen persecution is over.' Durham on the Revelation, chap. xii. lect. 1.

'The collective body of church members (says Mr Gib), brought forth by 'the *woman*, the church, at the time here referred to,—is said, in metaphorical 'terms, to have been caught up unto God and his throne; which is evidently 'the same with the *heaven* from which the great dragon and his angels are 'said to have been *cast out;* and this can only be applied to the *exaltation* of 'professing Christians, their being raised up to the enjoyment of the *laws and authority* of the Roman empire on their side; a *privilege* which had dreadfully belonged to the great dragon, called the Devil and Satan, for about 'three hundred years before. *This happy exaltation*, took place under *Constantine the Great*, &c.' Mr Gib's Memorial, &c. p. 9.

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now conferred upon her, to her corruption and injury, this did not prevent the church from rejoicing at the command of God in these privileges; and we should suspect those sentiments which lead us to opposite exercise. "And I "heard (says John) a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is "come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, "and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our "brethren is cast down, which accused them before our "God day and night," Rev. xii. 10. If the kings of the earth "gave their kingdom to the beast," it was also predicted, that they should "hate the whore and make her de-"solate;" and the word of God contains promises of the countenance of civil authority to the church, subsequent to the reign of Antichrist; so that this is not necessarily connected either with Antichristianism, or with the corruption of religion.

There are also some texts which are commonly urged, as unfavourable to the employment of civil power in the support of religion. One of these is Zechariah iv. 6. "Not "by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the "Lord of hosts." From these words it is inferred that *civil* power ought not to be employed in promoting religion.—Let us inquire if this is a just or a forced inference. These words were spoken to Zerubbabel, the governor of the Jews, and primarily referred to the building of the second temple. The people engaged in the work were few, destitute of might and power, and despised by their numerous and powerful enemies, who scoffingly said, "What do these feeble "Jews? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a "day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the "rubbish which are burnt." The Jews themselves were greatly discouraged, and had repeatedly desisted from the work, saying, "The time is not come, the time that the "Lord's house should be built." But amidst these discouragements, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubba-"bel, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit;" i. e. although ye are destitute of might and power for this work, the success of it does not depend upon these;

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my Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not, he will carry on and consummate the work. But was this declaration made to Zerubbabel to cause him to drop the sceptre from his hands, and take no direction in the work, lest there should be an appearance of human authority about it? Or, was it any contradiction of it when the Spirit of the Lord "turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto "them, to STRENGTHEN THEIR HANDS in the work of the "house of God, the God of Israel?" Ezra vi. 22.—We do not mean, that the application of this passage is confined to the rebuilding of the temple. We consider it as applicable to the advancement of the work of God under the New Testament. All that we plead is, that the proper import of the words, as ascertained by the circumstances in which they were spoken, be preserved; and that a sense inconsistent with this be not imposed upon them. In this view, the words contain a glorious and comfortable truth, particularly encouraging to the friends of religion, when its interests are low, and they may be destitute of means for supporting or reviving them. The work is the Lord's; the success of it depends upon his Spirit; he has engaged to carry it on, and he will do it (as he has formerly done) not only without, but in opposition to the power of authority, numbers, wealth, learning, eloquence, &c. But what God *does* is one thing, what men *ought* to do is another; nor, because he may proceed in one way at one time, are we to limit him to the same mode of operation at all times: "For who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, "being his counsellor, hath taught him?"

Another passage of scripture, often quoted on this subject, is, 2 Cor. x. 4. "The weapons of our warfare are not car-"nal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of "strong-holds."—That the weapons which belong to the church, her ministers and members, as such, are not carnal, what presbyterian does not allow? If we pleaded for the substitution of carnal weapons in the place of these, or for the employment of them by magistrates for the same purposes

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purposes and ends; if we pleaded for their being used as means adapted to the conversion of sinners, or spiritual edification, and that the gospel ought to be propagated, and religion imposed upon men by force;—there would be a propriety in urging such texts *. But, besides those means which are properly spiritual, and which conduce directly to the promotion of spiritual ends, there are others, of an external kind, which tend to promote the more free, convenient, extensive, and permanent use of the spiritual means. Money, for example, is not adapted to convert or edify the souls of men, but it is necessary, and useful for building churches and supporting religious ordinances. Civil authority belongs to this class of means; to represent it as inconsistent with those of the former kind, is as great an absurdity as to confound it with them. It may be lawfully employed, in defending and maintaining, externally, the kingdom of Christ; in securing the rights and privileges of particular churches; in removing external hindrances or molestations, and in providing those things which are necessary to the use of the spiritual means. There is no more reason for saying that the apostle condemns any of these things, than there is for saying that he forbids the use of civil power for defending the church from violence, because he has said "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal."

* 'These texts (says Mr Willison) are grossly perverted by some beyond 'their scope; for seeing our Lord in other plain texts approves of the Magis-'trate's using his power for the good of the church, it was not his design to 'condemn it in these texts in the least. Nor can any just inference be made 'from them to this purpose, seeing the Magistrate's acting in his sphere for the 'Church's good, is no ways inconsistent with the spirituality of Christ's king-'dom. For we do not at all plead for the Magistrate's power to be employed 'by methods of force and violence to set up Christ's spiritual and internal 'kingdom in mens hearts, or to oblige mens consciences to receive his laws, 'as the kings of this world do force their conquered subjects to receive and 'obey theirs. No, this spiritual kingdom of Christ is set up in the souls and 'consciences of men by means and weapons of a spiritual nature, as the apostle 'tells us, 2 Cor. x. viz. by the preaching of the gospel, and working of the 'Spirit of God therewith.' Defence of National Churches, p. 210.

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SECTION VIII.

ON LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

THERE is one objection which we have left for consideration in a separate section, as it is generally urged as totally eversive of the magistrate's power about religion; and, from the vague and ambiguous manner in which it is usually proposed, requires elucidation. This is liberty of conscience, or the right which all men are said to have to act in religious matters according to the dictates of their own judgment and conscience. The Synod, in their New Testimony, have often introduced this liberty; they blame the reformers for not paying due attention to it; they disclaim all obligation from the Solemn League to do any thing inconsistent with it, and they teach it, as a principal duty of magistrates, to secure men in the full enjoyment of it*. But there is only one place in which they have given a formal statement of their sentiments on the subject. 'A liberty 'of worshipping God (they say) in the way which they 'judge agreeable to his will, is a right common to all men. 'They may and often do err, and offend the most High God, 'by substituting a false worship in the place of that which 'he requires: but no power on earth may take their right 'from them; yet this cannot be pleaded in behalf of princi-'ples or practices obviously hurtful to civil society, still less 'in behalf of those which are subversive of it. Therefore, 'the civil magistrate does not go beyond the duty of his 'office, when he punishes such practices, or restrains the 'propagation of such principles †.' As we do not propose here

* N. Testimony, p. 31. 160, 197, 219.

†. These declarations in favour of Liberty of Conscience are to be viewed as a substitute for the testimony formerly borne against different instances of toleration. See Display, vol. i p. 66. 94, 95, 233, 287. This the Synod have now expunged as in direct opposition to the tenet which they have adopted. What was formerly only *tolerated*, they now declare to have a *right* to uncontrouled liberty. They must now condemn the toleration of false religion, because it proceeds upon the supposition that rulers have a right to interfere in religious matters, and implies some restriction of an independent prerogative.

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here to enter into an argumentative discussion of this subject, we shall merely state the following propositions, which may serve to remove some of the ambiguities with which it is often involved, and set aside the force of the objection which is urged from it against the lawful exercise of authority in such matters.

1. The liberty and rights of men admit of a different consideration, according to the law or authority to which they are viewed as relating, as divine or as human; and with reference to human authority, there is a difference, as it is political or ecclesiastical. Absolute incontroulable liberty is not the right of men in any of these respects. If we view men as in a state of society, and as religious and rational beings, it is absurd to suppose that every one has a right to act as he pleases, or as his own mind may dictate, in all matters, whether religious or moral, without being subject to restraint from the common authority.

2. To assert the right of men to think and act as they please, without respect to the moral law, and without being responsible to God, would be atheistical. And to suppose that men, who are subjected to a divine law, natural or revealed, are exempted from blame in every thing which they do agreeably to their judgment and conscience,—would be to deny a fixed rule of good and evil superior to man; would make conscience the ultimate standard of their actions, and render errors and crimes, in such cases, innocent. We do not suppose that this is meant in the doctrine of the Synod; although the general sentiment advanced by them is couched in such loose and unguarded expressions, as may lead to such an inference, and is an adoption of the language of those who, in this controversy, have vindicated that dangerous tenet.

3. The rights of conscience, in the present controversy, immediately respect the *avowed* sentiments and practices of men in religious matters, with reference to political government and external restraints. The internal, or (as they are called) elicit acts of the mind, no human authority can

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take cognizance of, or restrain. These are subject to the controul of God alone. Nor can human authority certainly distinguish between what is *really* maintained or done from the persuasion of conscience, and what is not. The plea *in foro humano*, must be of equal force whether it be real or pretended.

4. All rights among men imply correspondent obligations and duties. All just rights are to be respected and preserved inviolate. In this respect, the obligations and limitations of civil and ecclesiastical authority agree, and the condemnation of unwarrantable hindrance or restraint applies to both; although they differ as to the extent of their care and authority about religious matters, and restrain in different ways. Ecclesiastical authority may be, and often has been guilty of violating and unwarrantably restraining the rights, private judgment, and liberty of men in these matters, as well as that authority which is civil.

5. Under the expression, 'a liberty of worshipping God 'in the way in which they judge agreeable to his will,' must be included both opinions and practices, and the right pleaded must apply to these in all the different modifications, according to what men may account religion, or which puts on that guise and pretext. It must comprehend whatever is substituted in the room of genuine religion, be it idolatry, superstition, fanaticism, and corrupt Christianity, on the one hand; or, on the other, scepticism, infidelity, indifference, contempt of all public worship, &c. It is vain to attempt to veil or deny the extent of the principle. To confine the right to the simple acts of worship is absurd, as well as inconsistent with the new scheme. To limit it to those who worship according to the scriptures is ridiculous, when it is declared to be 'a right *common* to *all* men.' The principle exempts men from cognisance and restraint in all matters respecting religion. It must exempt those who chuse to live in ignorance of religion, who act from hatred or aversion to it, from a spirit of licentiousness and profanity, and against light and knowledge, as well as those who

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who act from motives of conscience and duty; and for one of the latter sort, there will be found ten of the former, among mankind at large. It is thus a screen for ignorance and irreligion, as well as for conscientious errors.

6. The rights of conscience, even when the plea may be real and credible, are not the same, either in a political or ecclesiastical view, when urged on the side of truth and duty, and when employed in behalf of sentiments and conduct which are opposite to both, and injurious to social interests and rights, which authority is bound chiefly to preserve. When acting in behalf of truth, and in the way of duty, persons have peculiar claims, which they can urge in any court, and which are entitled to regard from any authority. These cannot be prejudicial to the public good, or encroach upon the just rights of either civil or ecclesiastical rulers. It is otherwise with falsehood and corruption in religion, which as they are always hurtful to the individual, so they often prove highly detrimental to society.

7. Liberty of conscience, and the powers which God hath ordained, do not destroy one another *. By the law of God and of reasonable society, due regard must be paid to mutual rights; they must be balanced and adjusted so as to harmonize, and conspire to the public good. In cases where they may appear jarring and incompatible, some subordination and limitation may be necessary, and the primary and superior must have the preference. Societies have rights as well as individuals. But,

8. The due exercise of public authority, ecclesiastical or civil, in defending, promoting, settling, and supporting religion, does not imply a denial of the right of private judgment, or private liberty; but only a regulation and subordination of them in society, as the very nature and rules of it require. It implies no necessity of believing, no imposition upon conscience.

9. The rights of conscience, and of acting according to private judgment, in things moral and religious, with reference

* Confession of Faith, chap. xx. § 4.

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ference to political government, cannot be determined, without, at the same time, determining the rights of government. From the knowledge of the nature, ends, extent, and rights of the latter must the former be ascertained, in subordination to the law of God, by which both must be regulated. Opposite rights cannot exist together, but must destroy one another. To suppose that the magistrate has a right to interfere with religion, and yet, that every man in society has a right to act, in every respect, as he judges right in this matter, is absurd. Therefore,

10. Roundly to assert, that no power on earth (even understanding it of secular and coercive power), can take cognizance of, or restrain, to a certain degree, any avowed doctrines or practices of a religious kind, which are agreeable to mens consciences, is only a begging of the question in dispute; as it denies that the care and authoritative maintenance of religion is a duty of the civil magistrate, and implies, that matters of this kind fall not within his province. If they in any manner pertain to his office, or affect the objects and interests committed to his care, they must be in so far subjected to the regulations of law, and the restraints of administration, without respect to the internal principle from which the external acts may proceed. The Synod are obliged to allow this, in as far as the existence, or mere secular interests of society are concerned. For, after saying, 'no power on earth may take their right 'from them;' they add, 'yet this cannot be pleaded in be-'half of principles or practices obviously hurtful to society, 'still less in behalf of those which are subversive of it.' But these principles and practices may be such as men judge agreeable to God's will, and reckon themselves bound in conscience to publish and persist in; yet the Synod allow that the civil magistrate justly 'punishes such practices, or 'restrains the propagation of such principles.' Thus they infringe upon and admit of exceptions to the uncontroulable rights of conscience, so that it is no universal rule. And, by parity of reason, it is of as little force to restrain lawful authority

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authority in other acts, beyond these admitted, if they also are competent unto him. The objection from liberty of conscience is thus dropped, and the controversy resolves into the question, Whether civil authority is confined merely to the secular interests of society, or if the public maintenance and support of religion is not an important branch of the duty of magistrates? and this question we have examined in the preceding section.

11. The doctrine of the Synod does not secure persons from persecution on account of religion. They are obliged to admit, that those in authority are the proper judges of what may be necessary for the welfare of society, and what may injure its peace and security. A judgment about religious opinions and practices is in this way conceded to them, in the exercise of which, matters of this kind may be as much brought under their power as by the common doctrine of Protestants; and, by the abuse of which, the rights of conscience are as fully and irremediably exposed to be injured, and all severities and modes of political persecution may be practised, as on the other hypothesis. Upon this principle, worshipping assemblies may be shut up or restrained, ministers silenced, or ministerial liberty abridged, ecclesiastical courts dissolved or prohibited, the freedom of the press forbidden, and those who, from conscience and duty, transgress these arbitrary laws, exposed to fines, imprisonment, and death. These are not mere conjectures or suppositions. Those who are acquainted with the history of persecution know, that the most severe and sanguinary examples of it, in our own and in other countries, have been vindicated upon this principle; and that those engaged in carrying them on have refused that they restrained or punished men for their religious opinions and practices as such, but because these were injurious to the peace of society, and dangerous to existing governments. We know that the Presbyterian church, with her courts and discipline, has become the object of political jealousy, and been represented as dangerous to government and the peace of society;

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society; and in such representations, the warm partizans of toleration and liberty of conscience have joined with persons of a different stamp. Those rulers who consider 'only the secular interests of society,' and to whom religion may be a matter as indifferent in their private character, as we are now taught it is foreign to them in their public character, will regard infidels and persons who despise all religion, but who can comply with and forward all their measures, as 'good and peaceable members of society;' while those who fear God may become the objects of jealousy and restraint, because they condemn public evils, alarm, dispirit, or distract the nation by denouncing national judgments, or inculcating national reformation, particularly if they shall add to all this, the dangerous heresy of teaching that it is the duty of rulers, as they would wish to escape the vengeance of heaven, to support religion, and suppress reigning impieties.

12. The doctrine of the Synod on this head is chargeable with giving a license to sin. We do not found this charge on the supposition, that the laws of men directly affect the conscience, or constitute the formal nature of sin or duty; nor upon the supposition that the authority of rulers reaches to all the external actions of men which are morally evil. But, to give a liberty to men to commit things known and acknowledged to be evil, which ought to be prohibited or restrained by punishment in the state, or censure in the church, and to teach or grant this under the notion of a right,—is, in so far, a license to sin, a virtual dispensation with the law of God, by discarding lawful authority, and loosing the obligation to just laws among men.—Those who teach that men have a liberty to do any thing that is sinful, without being liable to be controuled by just laws, are chargeable with proclaiming a liberty to sin, although they should, at the same time, teach that they would offend God by so doing. The exercise of authority and laws is appointed by God as a means of preventing the spread of iniquity in the world, it must therefore be criminal

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nal in any to proclaim a liberty or exemption from these in any thing which falls under their cognizance. The Synod have proclaimed a liberty and right to all men, to act in all matters concerning religion, in the exercise of which they may openly offend the Most High, without being liable to controul or punishment from any power on earth, except merely for such opinions and practices as are 'obviously 'hurtful to society,' and interests 'only secular.' They have given a liberty to men to vent and propagate 'all blas-'phemies,' declaring that the magistrate ought not to interpose the sword, or use the authority committed to him by God, for the suppression of these or similar evils, but is restricted to the employment of advice and example, (New Testimony, p. 198). Is not this, upon the matter, to declare all the laws which have been made and are yet in existence for restraining such offences, to have no moral force, and to release the consciences of men from their obligation? This is not to "lift up a standard" against iniquity, when it has "come in like a flood;" it is rather to remove the barriers which have been already planted to impede its progress, and to open the sluices, that it may overflow and deluge the earth.

Lastly, Although civil and ecclesiastical society do not take cognizance of religion in the same manner, to the same extent, and for the same purposes, yet the general principle respecting the liberty and rights of conscience affects both, and would vindicate a general toleration and license in the church as well as the state. We do not suppose that it was the design of the Synod to apply the principle to ecclesiastical authority and restraints; but it is the tendency of the principle and reasoning with which we have to do. And if any person seriously considers the topics of argument which are usually brought forward, and insisted upon respecting private judgment and the rights of conscience, he must perceive, that they are either altogether impertinent and inapplicable to the subject, or else that they apply to all other kinds of human authority, as well as civil; that

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their tendency is to set aside all public judgment and restraint in such matters, and to make religion an affair entirely of personal and individual concern, in which "every "man does what is right in his own eyes."—This has also been the gradual operation of the principle: after being urged against the exercise of civil authority in religious matters, it has been employed against church authority. It is well known that this use was made of it by the Sectarians in England during the time of the Commonwealth, with whom the doctrine of *Liberty of Conscience* was the most darling tenet. It was revived by the Dissenters in England and Ireland near the beginning of the late century, who employed the most favoured topics of modern declamation as to dictating to consciences, depriving men of the right of private judgment, &c. in pleading exemption from human tests of orthodoxy, and the restraints of church authority with respect to opinions which they judged agreeable to scripture. In our own time we have abundant evidence of a similar operation of the same principle.

SECTION IX.

OF THE DIFFERENCE WITH RESPECT TO RELIGIOUS COVENANTS.

IN stating the doctrine of vows and religious covenants, the Synod, in their New Testimony, have proceeded upon principles different from those which have been laid down from the word of God by protestants, and which, when applied to the public covenants of this and other lands, instead of vindicating, condemn them in their proper form and matter, and greatly limit the extent of their obligation.

1. The definition given by the Synod of covenanting (even viewing it with reference to that species of it which they

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they have in their eye), does not distinguish explicit and formal covenants, from those engagements which are included in the public exercises performed in all Christian churches. It is said that 'public religious covenanting is 'the deed of a number of church-members, in which they 'jointly and publicly profess, to renounce all hope of life 'from the covenant of works; to take hold of the covenant 'of grace, and to devote themselves to the Lord; and, in 'the strength of promised grace, engage faithfully to cleave 'to him, to hold fast his truths, to perform the various 'duties which they owe to God and man, in their respective stations and relations, and to strengthen one another's 'hands in the work of the Lord *.' Now, what is said here, that is not included in public prayer and communicating, and in some forms of admission to public communion in Congregations often used; in which a number of church-members jointly and publicly profess to renounce, &c. We may indeed argue from this consequentially, in support of the warrantableness and propriety of church-members making such professions and engagements in a separate, express, and formal deed. But as the matter is here stated, other denominations, charged with neglecting covenanting, can plead that they practise the duty according to all the extent of the Synod's definition †. For, as to the formality

* New Testimony p. 151, 152.

† Mr Hutchison of St Ninians, who was an enemy to that Covenanting which had been practised by Presbyterians and in the Secession, allows all that is contained in the definition given of Covenanting by the Synod, and pleads that it is practised by his connections and other denominations of Christians. 'All gospel-worship (says he) is a vow essentially and materially. Gospel-worship in all the parts of it is instituted by God, and by his sacred authority, 'binds all Christians. And this profession, as Christians, clearly implies an 'acknowledgement of God, in his nature, truth, ordinances, and laws, according to the revelation of these great objects in his word. The church 'catholic, or a particular church, is just a greater or less body of men, publicly owning God, professing the belief of his word, their obligations to 'obey his authority. And such a profession fairly implies a *dedication* of 'themselves to God and his service, and a promise to do his will, which 'is all that is *essential* in a vow. All true gospel-worship, then, includes in 'it a vow, materially and essentially. I add, that several parts of gospel-worship contain a *formal* vow. Prayer, public, private, and secret, contains 'a formal vow, for therein all who rightly perform this duty, solemnly profess 'their dependence on God in Christ, for all that they have, or expect; for all 'the

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of an oath, the Synod allow that it is 'not essential to this 'duty;'—'though (they add) it is generally most proper to 'accompany it.' But to say, that an oath ought generally to accompany the exercise, as above described, is unjustifiable; as it would render oaths much more frequent, than either the scriptures or their nature and ends will warrant.

2. While the definition is in one view too general and indeterminate, it is in another too limited. It restricts religious covenanting to churches, and to men as under the evangelical covenant, instead of resting the duty upon the broad basis of the moral law, as applicable to mankind in all their various stations and relations. We readily grant that there are religious covenants which are peculiar to churches, and also, that duties peculiar to men in a gospel state can be performed by those only that know and profess the gospel. But the question is, Are these the *only* covenants of a religious kind which are warrantable and proper? And we apprehend that this question cannot be answered in the affirmative, without denying that they are founded in the light of nature and the moral law, the obligation of which cannot be limited to churches, or to the ecclesiastical character of those who are members of churches. It cannot be answered in the affirmative, without maintaining, that men and Christians have no concern with religion, and are

'the blessings of time and eternity; and that, by his grace, they will be his de-'voted servants, and under law to him. What is this but a vow in the most 'formal sense? All those who take a seat at the Lord's table, in the most so-'lemn and formal manner, avow the Lord to be their God. By partaking of 'the consecrated symbols of bread and wine, they openly declare themselves 'the children of God, and the disciples of Jesus, and under all the sacred obli-'gations of Christianity. This is vowing in the most *proper sense* of the word: 'Nor is there a single branch of divine worship, which does not include in it 'a vow either *material* or *formal*. It follows clearly from the above doctrine, 'that vows are not *occasional*, but *stated* duties. They are just as stated as any 'branch of divine worship; for they are *essential* in the *entire* worship of God, 'and in *every* branch of worship under *every* dispensation of the divine will.— 'Those who join in the public worship of the sanctuary, in prayer, praise, hear-'ing, baptism, and the holy supper, vow unto God as *really* and as *publicly*, as 'any can do on any particular occasion that men have agreed on for public 'vowing.—Other Christian societies vow to God as *really* and *formally* as they 'do.' Hutchison's Animadversions on two Pamphlets, p. 104, 105, 106.

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are incapable of contracting religious obligations, in any other character or capacity than that of church members.

Covenants, vows, and oaths, are not duly distinguished by the Synod. Though some religious covenants and promissory oaths be of the same nature with religious vows, yet they are not all of that kind. Covenants, leagues, promissory engagements and oaths, have a more extensive meaning and use. They may be entered into when particular occasions require, and special obligations may be contracted by them, in reference to things morally binding, or even merely lawful, and not previously obligatory. They may be justly termed *religious*, not only when they are immediately entered into with God as the party, in a profession of faith and obedience to the gospel, but also when matters of religion, in the large sense of the word, or things intimately connected with it, are the principal matter and object of them *; and when they are intended as a solemn pledge of unity and fidelity between man and man, the different parties respectively engaging or swearing in a common and important transaction. Nor is it improper, on some occasions of this kind, for the parties to engage to God for the performance of the respective parts, as this is the strongest pledge which they can give, and the firmest tie by which they can be bound to one another.

These covenants and oaths, according to the common doctrine of Moralists and Divines, do not derive their warrant from supernatural revelation, nor positive institution, but belong to natural law and religion; and thence their obligation arises. They have, accordingly, been in use among all nations, and under all forms of religion, true or false. But their warrant, and the proper use of them with reference to religion, are more clearly taught and corroborated by the authority of revelation. They are applicable to matters of pure revelation, and the peculiar concerns of churches; but they are not limited to these. They extend to all the subjects of the moral law, the different purposes connected

* According to the maxim, *Religiosa esse quæ religioni adhærent.*

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connected with it, and to the various relations of men and societies under it. Families, colleges, hospitals, &c. are not churches; but they may all, as well as kingdoms, have moral and religious duties to discharge, and may be brought under explicit engagements to perform them. To restrict their warrant, their obligation, or the character in which they are binding, is to attempt to limit that law which extends to all men, and is "exceeding broad;" and, although made from a professed regard to the covenant of grace, is really derogatory to the authority of the great Lawgiver. The foundation on which oaths and vows are stated in our Confession of Faith may be seen by consulting chap. xxii. See also Larger Catechism, quest. 108. 112, 113.

In laying down the doctrine of Covenanting, the Synod seem to overlook those religious Covenants which a people may have a call on particular occasions to enter into, with a special reference to the public state and interests of religion; and they view the duty merely with reference to our dealings with God about the salvation of our souls, and to such professions and engagements as are necessarily connected with that faith which interests in the covenant of grace, and which are made by all genuine believers. Of the propriety of such exercise, and of a joint and public profession of it, particularly as stated in the bond hitherto used in the Secession, we entertain no hesitation. To the doctrine taught by the Associate Presbytery, in their Act *Concerning the Doctrine of Grace*, we most cordially agree; in which, while all obedience is represented as founded in the law, the evangelical manner in which it is to be performed, as to principles, motives, ends, &c. is clearly stated; and, in which, while the distinction between God's covenant of grace and our covenants of duty is maintained, the connection between them, and the influence which the former has upon the latter is particularly explained. We observe no such accuracy in the new statement given by the Synod; and the expunging of the phrase 'COVENANT OF DUTY,' from

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from the new bond which they have adopted, gives ground to suppose that they are unfavourable to the distinction *.

But, although perfectly satisfied of the propriety of such professions as have a direct respect to the salvation of the soul, and of the place which these have in the Secession bond, we cannot admit that these must necessarily have a place in all religious covenants, and particularly in those bonds which are entered into with a special reference to a public cause, and which formally consist of express engagements relative to this. The grand reason why it is so strenuously urged, that the formality of religious covenanting lies in the professed renunciation of the covenant of works, and taking hold of the covenant of grace, is, that the duty may be represented as wholly ecclesiastical. This is the point which the Synod always keep in their eye, and to which every thing must bend. This they maintain, although at the expence of condemning approved examples of covenanting, both in scripture and the history of the church. It is undeniable that the word of God makes mention of religious covenants and vows, containing solemn engagements to particular duties, in which there are no such professions, or express declarations as the above. See Numb.

* The early writers of the Secession were very careful in distinguishing between the covenant of grace, together with the manner in which sinners come to be instated in it, and our covenants of duty; well aware that the freedom of divine grace depended much upon this distinction. 'We remark (says Mr 'Moncrieff) that the oath of God which we are to enter into is not the cove-'nant of grace, but it is a covenant of duty and gratitude; and all that have ta-'ken hold of the covenant of grace are obliged to devote themselves to the 'Lord in a covenant of duty.—By our believing the promise of God in his 'word, and our trusting in the person of Christ, who is to be believed upon in 'the gospel of the grace of God, we are united to the Lord Jesus Christ, the 'covenant head, and thereby we are personally entered into the covenant of 'grace.—Upon the back of our believing the promises, and trusting on the per-'son of Christ, by which we are personally entered into the covenant, there 'doth necessarily *follow* an absolute consent to take Christ for our Husband, 'Head, and Lord, &c.' Moncrieff's Practical Works, vol. i. p. 227, 247.'

More lately, however, there has been a departure from this doctrine, and covenanting has been represented sometimes as the *restipulation*, sometimes as the *acceptance*, of the covenant of grace. Thus, under the notion of making covenanting *altogether evangelical*, it is converted into an exercise *really legal*—The Member of Synod who drew up the *New Bond* has expressed his sentiments

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Numb. xxi. 2. Ezra x. 3, 4. Jer. xxxiv. 12. The same may be said of the public covenants of this and of other countries. Were these therefore legal, and essentially defective? The question, it ought always to be remembered, is not respecting the right and acceptable manner of performing the duty, but respecting its warrant and foundation, and that which necessarily constitutes its matter. It does not respect the character in which we are to view God, in all approaches unto, and dealings with him, such as enjoy the revelation of grace, must always view him according to his revealed and gracious character. In swearing an oath upon any occasion, a Christian is not to view him as an absolute God. "Thou shalt fear the Lord THY GOD, "and serve him, and swear by his name," Deut. vi. 13. x. 20. The reception of the covenant of grace is necessary to the acceptable performance of every moral duty, as well as of vowing and swearing to God; and we must "do all" things "in the name of the Lord Jesus," and in dependance upon his grace, Eph. vi. 5,—10. Col. iii. 17,—23. The evangelical manner of performing duties does not interfere with, nor alter their moral warrant and obligation, and determines

ments upon the subject in the most plain and decided terms: 'All acceptable 'covenants (says he), are neither more nor less than an *acceptance* of God's cove-'nant of grace. We neither consider our covenant of duties as a distinct cove-'nant by itself, nor as precisely the same thing with the covenant of grace; 'what we say is, our covenanting is the same thing with our *acceptance* of the 'covenant of grace. We enter into no covenant, but the covenant of grace. 'Cursed be all that religious covenanting that amounts to any thing more than 'an explicit acceptance of God's covenant.' Young's Sermon on Covenanting

'They (the Israelites), in their consent to this covenant (says another writ-'er), as far as they acted according to the proper design of it, *prefigured* the 'church of Christ under the New Testament, in her cordial acceptance of the 'covenant of grace, and her engagement to be the Lord's. For even the cove-'nant of grace requires on the part of believers, a *restipulation* as to the per-'formance of duty. Such language, to some has a legal sound. But there is 'nothing legal in our engaging, with all possible solemnity, to walk in God's 'ways, and to keep his commandments. Our acceptance of the covenant of 'grace necessarily implies such an engagement. When God promises to be 'to us "a God:" he requires of us that we be to him "a people:" Then only 'can we be chargeable with legality, when we enter into such an engagement 'in our own strength, or view our obedience as a condition of our enjoyment 'of the blessings of this gracious covenant.' Jamieson's Use of Sacred History, vol. i. p. 358, 359.

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termines nothing as to the characters in which they are incumbent and binding.

In vindicating those expressions in the New Testimony, by which religious covenanting is restricted to the character of *church members*, the Synod say, that they do not mean to deny 'that vowing and swearing unto God is, in general, a 'duty founded on the law of nature: but the description 'given of covenanting, refers to public religious covenant-'ing among Christians, which, like every other duty, ought 'to be performed in agreeableness to the directions of the 'word of God *.' That covenanting 'ought to be per-'formed in agreeableness to the directions of the word of 'God,' who can doubt? And the Synod say, very properly, that, in this respect, it is on a level with 'every other duty.' But certainly this can be no proof, that it is 'entirely an 'ecclesiastical duty;' and consequently can be no vindication of the Synod's doctrine, nor a sufficient answer to the objections made against it. Marriage 'ought to be per-'formed in agreeableness to the directions of the word of 'God;' and, Christians are bound to marry 'only in the 'Lord.' But is marriage on this account an ecclesiastical duty, and is the marriage-vow incumbent on persons 'in 'their character as members of the church of Christ?' Magistracy 'ought to be performed in agreeableness to the directions of the word of God;' is it therefore an ecclesiastical ordinance, and is dominion founded in grace? What the Synod mean, when they admit that 'vowing and swearing 'unto God is *in general* founded on the law of nature,' it may be difficult to say; but certainly if they are moral duties, which have their foundation in the law of nature, they cannot be 'entirely ecclesiastical,' even when performed among Christians, and agreeably to the directions of scripture. Christianity does not set aside the relations under which we stand, nor relax the obligations by which we are bound to God, as our Creator and Governor, when it reveals him to us in the gracious character of Redeemer.

* N. Testimony p. 155.

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3. The Synod confound the terms *religious* and *ecclesiastical*, as if they were always of the same import. According to them there is no medium between *civil* and *ecclesiastical:* if a duty is not civil, then it must be 'entirely ecclesiastical;' and if it is not entirely ecclesiastical, then it must be 'merely temporal,' or civil. N. Test. p. 154, 162. But there are *religious* duties which are not *ecclesiastical*. An oath is a religious duty, and an act of worship, but is it therefore 'entirely ecclesiastical?' It may be applied either to matters civil or ecclesiastical, and according to its matter, it may be denominated a civil oath, or an ecclesiastical, but in itself it is properly religious. 'A vow is of the like 'nature with a promissory oath *.' The same may be said of swearing unto God, it is a religious duty; but it cannot be said to be 'entirely ecclesiastical,' unless when it is applied to things which peculiarly or exclusively belong to the church. Oaths, vows, and covenants, while they are religious in their nature, may bind men in their different characters, according to their matter and design, whether natural, civil, political, ecclesiastical, or domestic.

4. All that the Synod say upon the doctrine of public covenanting, agrees much better to the notion and plan of it admitted in many Independent churches, than with that which has been adopted in the Presbyterian church, either with or without the concurrence of civil authority. The Independents pleaded for some explicit form of a covenant, not on some special occasions only, but as necessary to the very being and constitution of a church, which Presbyterians in their writings opposed. A certain number of church members might, in this manner, form themselves into a church, possessing all ecclesiastical powers and privileges, independent of other churches. Their covenants they held to be purely ecclesiastical, originating in the consent of the people forming a particular congregation; yet neighbouring congregations, or, in their language, many neighbouring churches, might, by agreement, join in the same or similar covenant, and make the same profession. They made these church-

* Confession of Faith, Chap. xxii. § 5.

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church-covenants chiefly to consist in a professed acceptance of the covenant of grace, and in engaging to discharge duties towards one another as church members. No common authority, however, was acknowledged over these church members, or congregational churches voluntarily covenanting together, that might claim a right to require or enjoin such deeds upon them *.

The reader may compare both the language and the doctrine of the New Testimony with the above, and see how nearly they agree. In some instances the resemblance has already been pointed out: it may be traced also in the following. The Synod say, it is a deed of church members; but whether of many or few, whether organized into a society, with their governors or not, is not said: As to any public authority enjoining public covenants, though this hath usually been considered as of great moment in the question about the lawfulness or expediency, as well as the matter and occasion of them (especially when solemn oaths accompany them), they say nothing. The Confession of Faith is not chargeable with such a material omission. 'A lawful 'oath (it says) being imposed by lawful authority, ought to 'be taken,' Chap. xxii. § 2. according to the scriptures there quoted, 1 Kings viii. 13. Neh. xiii. 25. Ezra x. 5. And an obligation arises from the interposition of such authority, distinct from that which the law of God imposes, or that which flows from the matter of them in themselves considered. Nay, the Synod expressly admit, that persons in some cases may warrantably enter into religious covenants, without being 'under the direction of ecclesiastical courts, or

* These points will be found particularly discussed on both sides, in the following tracts, Church-Government and Church-Covenant discussed. An apology of the Churches in New-England for Church-Covenant, or a discourse touching the Covenant between God and men, and especially concerning Church-Covenant; that is to say, the Covenant which a company do enter into when they become a Church; and which a particular person enters into when he becomes a member of a Church. Both published, or republished, by the noted sectary Hugh Peters, London 1643. See also a brief Narration of some Church courses, in the Churches lately erected in N. England, London 1644. Hooker's survey of Church Discipline, chap. iv. &c. Rutherford, Baillie, and others, against the Independents.

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'as formally met as a worshipping assembly:' and as for courts, government, and assemblies of a civil nature, they put them entirely out of the question. They have found out, it seems, a middle or third way, in which these public deeds may be conducted and performed, belonging neither to church, nor state; and some of the most solemn and extraordinary exercises of the church (if extraordinary they admit them to be) may be performed without the inspection of its governors, and without a worshipping assembly! As they speak of these religious covenants of which they approve, as having their origin in the joint agreement of members in a particular congregation, so they represent them as being a common bond between 'neighbouring congregations, 'or churches holding communion together, or in order to this 'communion;' because it is warrantable for them so to join, if they please: which describes the state of sister congregations or churches owning no common government over them, whereby they may be considered as one church, as Presbyterial or National churches usually are. In the first draught of the Testimony (p. 137.) it was said, 'In this 'manner (by covenanting) may particular churches be at 'first constituted.'

5. By their doctrine respecting covenanting, the Synod have condemned some of the most noted covenants, leagues, and oaths, respecting religion, which have been entered into in this and other Protestant countries. They distinguish covenants into two kinds, 'civil and religious covenants.' Religious covenanting is, they say, 'entirely an ecclesiastical duty,' in which 'those invested with civil power have no 'other concern—than as church members,'—who are to be viewed 'as in their spiritual character devoting themselves 'and their seed to the Lord;' accordingly such covenants ought to be confined to 'matters purely religious *.' Again, 'in a civil covenant (they say) we in a civil character, enter 'into or seal an obligation with respect to things *merely temporal*.'

* N. Testimony, p. 53. 154, 159, 162.

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'*poral**.' Besides these covenants the Synod allow of no other.

Now, it may be safely said, that none of the public covenants which have been so famous in Europe since the period of the Reformation, answer either to the one or the other of those mentioned by the Synod. None of the bonds entered into by the Protestants of Scotland before the establishment of the reformed religion. Not the national covenant of Scotland. Not the solemn league of the three nations. Not the leagues and covenants entered into by the Protestant princes, states, and cities of Germany, of Switzerland, of the Low Countries, &c. That these were mere ecclesiastical deeds, in which civil rulers, or others in various secular stations and characters, who entered into them, had no other concern than other church members, and in which the covenanters were viewed in no other light than as an extensive church, none will say who is acquainted with them. Neither can it be said that they respected 'things merely temporal;' for reformation, or the maintenance and preservation of religion was their principal object, and the immediate design of entering into them. In the Leagues of Germany and the Netherlands there was a profession of the Protestant religion, which was the pledge of their union, as well as engagements to mutual assistance and defence in the preservation of their religion against common enemies.

In the preamble of the Solemn League and Covenant, these examples are expressly pleaded. 'We have now at last, 'according to the commendable practice of these kingdoms 'in former times †, and the example of God's people in other 'nations, after due deliberation, resolved and determined to 'enter into a mutual and Solemn League and Covenant.'

By

* N. Testimony, p. 154.

† By 'the commendable practice of these kingdoms in former times' there is a reference to what had been done not only in Scotland, but also in England, both in the League between that country and Scotland, about the time of the Spanish Armada, the oath of association for maintaining the protestant religion and defending the queen's person; with the vows and protestations at different times taken by the parliament and body of the nation.

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By these examples was the taking of the Solemn League recommended *. They have always been viewed as religious covenants, and as a partial accomplishment of the predictions of scripture with respect to this matter; as appears from the writings of Presbyterians † and Seceders ‡.

The doctrine of the Synod is irreconcilable with the Solemn League and Covenant, and condemns it in its proper form, matter, and design. No one who reads it, or who is acquainted with the causes in which it originated, and the ends which it was intended to promote, can believe that it was a mere church deed, 'entirely an ecclesiastical duty,' and that the kingdoms, in entering into it, were to be viewed in no other light than that of 'an extensive church, or 'churches holding communion with each other.' It was intended to promote not only 'the glory of God, and the 'advancement of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Je-'sus Christ,' but also 'the honour and happiness of the 'king's majesty, and the true public liberty, safety, and 'peace of the kingdoms,' or as it is also expressed, the 'com-'mon cause of religion, liberty, and the peace of the king-'doms.' The impulsive cause of it was the *deplorable, distressed* and *dangerous* state of the *kingdoms*, as well as the *churches* of Ireland, England, and Scotland. And the clauses relating to these great objects were embodied and sworn in one oath and Covenant; the obligation of which deed has been owned by the soundest Presbyterians, and the best patriots in these kingdoms, and, in particular, has been solemnly avouched by Seceders.

It is in vain to pretend that matters purely religious ought

* 'As it is acceptable to God, so have we for it the precedent and example, 'not only of the people of God of old, of the Reformed churches of Germany 'and the Low-Countries, but of our own noble and Christian progenitors in 'the time of the danger of Religion; which is expressed in the covenant itself.' Mr Henderson's Speech at subscribing the Covenant, 25th September, 1643.

† Brown's Apologetical Relation, p. 146, 148, 383, 384. Review of a paper written against our National and Solemn League and Covenant; by a minister of the church of Scotland, p. 108. 2d. edit. and 'An Essay to prove the perpetual 'obligation of the National Covenant, in a letter from a lover of the Covenant-'ed Reformation,' also a minister of the church of Scotland, printed anno 1727, p. 43. 44.

‡ Moncrieff's works, vol. ii. p. 62. Morison's Present Duty, p. 61.

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ought to have been separated from those which were wholly civil and political; that two covenants ought to have been framed, one into which persons could have entered as church members, and the other as members of the state; and that the Synod acknowledge the obligation of the covenant with respect to 'the religious reformation' and 'maters purely 'religious.' All that is plausible, is neither solid nor true. For, in *the first place*, let such persons make this distinction in the matter of the covenant, and let them shew what engagements were purely religious, and what were wholly civil. Unless this be done, we may be excused from believing that our ancestors could have separated them; nor can we know what such persons mean, when they acknowledge the obligation of the covenant. It may be safely said that this cannot be pointed out as to *one* of the *six* articles of the league. For example, the first article contains an engagement 'to endeavour the preservation of the reformed 'religion in the church of Scotland.' Now, did not this refer to the political laws by which that religion was settled, and necessarily include the preservation of these? Did it not include an engagement to resist, even by force, all attempts violently to deprive Scotland of her religious profession and privileges? Accordingly, the covenanters engage to endeavour this preservation 'in their several places and 'callings—against common enemies.' The same remarks apply to the second article, as to the extirpation of popery, prelacy, superstition, &c. with the measures necessary for this, many of which were political as well as ecclesiastical. On the other hand, those articles in the league which related more immediately to the state of the kingdoms, were not wholly political or temporal; nor were they engrossed into it merely under that consideration, but as connected with and subordinate to the higher end, the defence and reformation of religion, and the settlement of a religious union and uniformity in the three kingdoms. The covenanters engaged 'to preserve the rights and privileges of the parliaments;' but this included 'the defence of the true religion,' and also its

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its reformation, which the parliament of England had begun, and which was one ground of this quarrel between them and the king. They engaged to endeavour 'the discovery of malignants;' but these were persons who were enemies both to the religion and liberties of the kingdoms. They engaged to maintain the peace established between the kingdoms, but this was threatened and endangered by causes that were of a religious as well as political kind. Those who confine the obligation of the covenant to things 'purely religious,' would need to ascertain well what things are so; and perhaps it may be found that they do not hold the obligation of *one* article of it, as to some of those things which were immediately intended by those who framed and swore that oath.

But, *secondly*, although the distinction could be shewn between those parts of the covenant which are political and those which are religious, we cannot allow that our ancestors ought to have separated them: nor does it appear that it was practicable for them to have done so, in any joint and effectual appearance in behalf of these several interests, or against the public grievances and dangers then affecting them, when they were in many respects so closely and inseparably involved. In the providence of God they were joined together, and why should they have put them asunder? Those who were endeavouring to subvert the civil rights of the nation, were also enemies to religion and reformation, and were using the same means to hinder the one and overturn the other. When the interests of nations, both religious and political, the privileges of churches and states are at stake, exposed to the same dangers, and having the same friends and foes, why should they not be conjoined in the same oath, and why should not churches and states enter into, and swear such an oath and league? This doth not necessarily imply an improper confounding or blending of them. When religion and liberty are exposed to the same dangers, why should they not be maintained and defended by the same means, and why should not their friends associate,

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ciate, and solemnly pledge and bind themselves to stand by one another, and to discharge their duty, in the common cause, against common enemies? The preservation or reformation of religion is a great national concern, and the maintenance of a just and free government is a great blessing to the church at any time. Nor is it the first time that the danger into which a people have been brought of losing their civil privileges, has awakened them to a concern for asserting their religious. At the period referred to, it is well known that regal tyranny was so closely linked with prelatical dominion and persecution, with the interests of popery, superstition, and profaneness, that it was vain to attempt to repress the latter, without opposing the former, and without some considerable alteration in the Ecclesiastico-political constitution of England and Ireland. All these considerations combined in demanding such a league as was sworn *.

When the Associate Presbytery engaged in the renovation of the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms, they did this in a bond suited to their circumstances. And they did so with the greatest propriety: As they existed as an ecclesiastical society, did not constitute any distinct part of the nation in a political view, and had no immediate connection with the civil powers, as well as because the state of the

* 'Some people, it may be, will wish, that the civil and religious parts of 'our Covenants, particularly of the Solemn League, had been made two dis-'tinct and separate oaths.—But people are in extreme hazard of mistaking the 'measures of others, unless they carefully advert to their circumstances, and 'consider themselves as in their stead. The objection, it is apprehended, pro-'ceeds upon a misapprehension of the state of matters in those days, and a *fool-'ish conceit* of being wiser than those venerable Patriots whom God honoured 'to be the deliverers of the church and nation from impending ruin. On a 'sober consideration of their situation, it is not easy to conceive how they could 'have separated them. They were in danger of losing their religion. How? 'Through invasions made on their privileges as good subjects. Their religion was 'ready to be swallowed up in the whirlpool of tyranny — so that it really does 'not appear practical for them to have done otherwise than they did, without 'betraying palpable indifferency about what was (as it infinitely well deserved 'to be) dearer to them than all things else.' Morison's Present Duty, p. 389. 390.

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public was very different, it would have been improper in them to have drawn up their bond in the same form with either the National Covenant or the Solemn League. But did they do this, because they thought the form of the national covenants improper? By no means. Did they do so, because they thought that the mixed form of the Solemn League, as including civil as well as religious things, was chargeable with sinful blending of matters which ought to have been separated? Not at all. Let us hear their own words. 'The Presbytery has not the LEAST ob-'jection against the OLD FORM of our covenants, as VERY 'SUITABLE unto the time wherein they were framed; they 'only plead for alterations of the form suitable unto *our* '*present* circumstances *.' Words cannot be plainer. The form of the old covenants was suited to their season; the form of the Secession-bond was suited to its season. Accordingly, when they give a reason why they did not introduce into their bond such clauses, with reference unto civil matters, as were in the former covenants, the reason turns entirely upon their *present circumstances*. They 'agreed, That it was not *suitable* to their *present* circum-'stances to blend civil and ecclesiastic matters in the oath 'of God, in renewing our covenants; because that the cog-'nizance of civil affairs belongs not properly to them as a 'church-judicatory †.' The same thing they illustrate afterwards when they say, 'the plain case is, The covenants were entered into, and frequently renewed, by the interposition of the *civil* authority as well as the *ecclesiastic*. But as there is no interposition at present of civil authority, in the renewing of the covenants, so the Presbytery reckon it improper for them to meddle in these that are of a civil nature (or to apply the civil part of our covenants—as an oath of allegiance to the present king and government), and therefore they could do nothing this way in their *accommodation* of the covenants to the present time ‡.'

But

* Display, vol. i. p. 268. † Ibid, p. 258. ‡ Ibid, p. 273.

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But although the Associate Presbytery reckoned the cognizance of civil affairs, *as such*, incompetent to a church judicatory at any time, and did not judge it suitable to their circumstances to introduce matters of this kind into their bond, that were suited only to a different state of things, or to apply the civil part of our covenants as a formal oath of allegiance to the present government (for it is of this that they immediately speak *); yet it is not a fact which is asserted by the Synod in their Narrative, p. 53. that, 'They 'so framed their engagement to duties as to exclude every 'thing but matters *purely* religious.' Did not the Associate Presbytery, both in their testimony and other public deeds, approve and bear witness for many *political laws* passed in favour of the reformed religion? Did they not declare the deed of *civil* constitution, as settled in the reforming period, morally unalterable? Do they not declare, that they bear witness for the *civil* reformation as well as the ecclesiastical? Did they not also testify against the parliamentary acts, overturning the reformation, and against many other laws and political managements, confessed as evils in the Acknowledgement of Sins? Will any person, who understands the meaning of words, say, that these were 'matters *purely religious?*' Yet, as the bond reduplicates upon the Acknowledgement of Sins, the covenanter engaged to testify against the sinful laws and managements. Notwithstanding all their refining, the Synod have not yet been able to purge their new bond, so as to 'exclude from 'it every thing but matters purely religious.' It must undergo another process, before it can stand the touchstone of their own doctrine. Indeed, there is great evidence that some of the favourite phrases that are used on this subject are not understood by those who have them continually in their mouths, that they are often, *vox, et præterea nihil.*

5. The doctrine of the Synod greatly limits the obligation of the public covenants of this land. We have seen that it does so as to their matter; it does so also as to their

 subjects,

* See Display, vol. i. p. 258. with Mr Gib's note, and p. 273.

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subjects, and the character in which they are binding. As the Synod describe religious covenanting to be 'entirely an 'ecclesiastical duty,' and insist that 'those invested with 'civil power have no other concern with it, than as church-'members *;' so they consider the National Covenant and Solemn League as mere church-deeds, and rest their obligation solely upon the sameness of the church, and 'the rela-'tion between parents and children,' which 'the exhibition 'of God's covenant recognizes †.' They pay no regard to the public character and capacity in which they were enjoined, sworn, promoted, and frequently ratified, and to the permanency of the national and political state of the three kingdoms; and have intentionally yielded up and discarded the strong argument which arises from these in support of the national and perpetual obligation of these covenants, which has been used by Seceders and other Presbyterians. Accordingly, in the account which they give of these covenants and their obligation, they speak vaguely, and in general expressions, which convey no definite meaning as to their extent. The National Covenant, they say, 'was 'sworn and subscribed by the king, Jan. 28. 1581; and 'in a few weeks after, by *people* of all ranks *in* the nation. 'Thus *the friends of a Covenanted Reformation* not only 'made a public profession of the truth, but avouched this 'profession with all the solemnity of an oath ‡.' Again, 'The Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations 'was framed by *the friends of reformation* §.' And in the new *Acknowledgement of Sins*, the obligation of this famous League and Covenant of the three kingdoms dwindles down to an obligation upon *some* persons. 'Afterwards (say the Synod), by the Solemn League and Covenant, *some* of all ranks in the three kingdoms engaged, &c ‖.' It is in this manner that the Synod acknowledge, and bear testimony 'for the continued obligation of the Covenants of our re-'forming

* N. Testimony, p. 162. † Ibid, p. 157. ‡ Ibid, p. 19.
§ Ibid, p. 29. ‖ Ibid, p. 219.

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'forming ancestors—upon persons of all ranks in these lands 'and their posterity!'

How different is this from the account given of the obligation of these covenants in the original Testimony and former deeds of the Secession! In these they are declared to be binding upon the *nation* as well as the *church*. They say, that 'the *whole land* stands indispensibly bound and obliged 'by the most solemn covenant-engagements;' that, by the National Covenant, 'this *kingdom* made a *national surrender* of themselves, and bound and obliged both themselves 'and their posterity;' that the Solemn League was 'a giving up of all these kingdoms;' that the 'General Assembly of this church reckoned this land bound and obliged 'by the Solemn League and Covenant; this land declared 'they looked upon this oath as *nationally* binding upon 'them,'—'our engagement therein is not *only national* 'but *personal*;' (i. e. though the nation in its public capacity should disown the obligation, and refuse to perform, yet every covenanter was bound also individually) that 'the 'whole land was solemnly sworn,'—'the *whole nation* hath 'given openly up with their solemn covenant engagements,' —'the sins of this whole covenanted church and land;*' with many other expressions of the same kind, declaratory of the obligation of the covenants on the body *political* and *ecclesiastical*, as well as on *individuals*.

The Synod only plunge themselves into inconsistencies, by an anxious wish to appear to retain their former testimony as to the obligation of the National Covenants, and to continue the use of certain phrases on this subject, while the sentiment which gave meaning to them is discarded, and while their own declarations are at war with themselves. Sometimes it is pretended, that the Synod maintain the obligation of these covenants upon the nations, because the greater part did swear them: but then it turns out, that what the Synod holds is, that only 'some of all ranks' were bound by one of them. Sometimes the Solemn League must be

* Display, vol. i. p. 53, 56, 59, 60, 61, 227, 232, 247.

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be divided into two parts, (1 Kings iii. 26, 27); and the *civil* part is allowed to have been obligatory, strictly and properly in a *national* view: but then the fact is, that both parts constituted one deed, which was entered into by the nation and its representatives, who sware to God, as well as to one another, equally with reference to all its parts, which deed was publicly ratified in the same form; so that one part of it could not be nationally binding, unless the whole was so. Sometimes the Synod give no judgment as to the civil part of that covenant; at other times, they are 'of the 'same judgment with the Associate Presbytery,' who, without any reserve, declared that it was, 'for the matter of it, 'just and warrantable,' (Matth. ix. 16, 17). At one time they declare, that they, 'in acknowledging the obligation 'of the covenants of our ancestors, make no exception as 'to any part of their matter;' yet, as if conscious that they had gone too far, it is immediately added, with singular incongruity, 'according to the *limitations* expressed in the 'Narrative and Testimony*.' (N. Testimony, page 159.) Thus the reader is sent through the whole Narrative and Testimony to find out the extent in which the Synod acknowledge the obligation of these deeds; at the very time that he was taught to expect a preci edetermination of the point.

Those who refuse the national obligation of the covenants, endeavour to set this in opposition to their ecclesiastical obligation; as if those who maintained the former denied or were obliged to overlook the latter. Nothing however can be more evidently unfounded. We maintain that the nation and

* The doctrine of making 'no *exception* to *any* part according to *limitations*,' is akin to that which was advanced by certain writers of the church of England, who maintained that 'the church has a right in itself to be *absolutely* o-'beyed, upon conditions and *limitations*;' and that there is 'an indispensible ob-'ligation upon the subjects of Christ, to an absolute obedience to the authori-'ty of the church *in some instances*.' Upon which a lively writer remarks, 'When I meet with the *conditions* upon which the *absolute* is founded, and the '*dispensation-instances* of an *indispensible authority*, I immediately say with my-'self—may I have to do with such as *Bellarmine*, or any who know what 'they would be at? I despair of coming at the state of the controversy with 'such writers as these, who manage indeed, as if they had an *absolute authority* 'to talk nonsense, with due *limitations* and *restrictions*.' Occasional Paper, vol. ii. numb. 7.

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and the church entered jointly into these covenants, and that both are bound by them; that they were approved, ratified, and promoted by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and sworn by them and the body of the people under them; and therefore are binding in both characters. And we think that this view of the extent of their obligation accords with the nature and design of the covenants themselves; is warranted by the moral grounds on which they were founded; by the common principles of social public obligations; by approved examples of religious covenants mentioned in scripture; and that it is agreeable to the common sentiments which Presbyterians have entertained respecting them. Each of these would admit of large illustrations, which we cannot here propose to introduce.

Was it only in the character of church-members that our ancestors could swear, in the National Covenant, that they did 'detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman 'Antichrist upon the scriptures, upon the kirk, the civil 'magistrate, &c.?' Was it only as church-members that they could swear to defend the doctrine and discipline of the kirk, according to their vocation and power? Was it only as church-members that they could swear to defend the king's person and authority, and not to suffer themselves to be divided or withdrawn from this blessed and loyal conjunction? Similar questions may be put as to all the articles of the Solemn League and Covenant.

The general grounds of the duty are a foundation sufficiently broad for the national obligation of such covenants. As vowing and swearing are moral duties, founded in the light of nature, and more clearly taught in scripture *; so nations and kingdoms, in their corporate and public capacity, are under the moral government of God, capable of the obligations of the moral law, and bound to do homage unto him and promote his worship †. Shall nations be held capable

* Gib's Display, vol. i. p. 354, 355. Morison's Present Duty, p. 20, 21.

† 'As every individual depends on God, in a personal capacity; so must 'every people, in a public capacity. It is God, who raises up kingdoms, pre-'serves

capable of coming under obligations to one another; and shall we suppose that they are incapable of binding themselves to the common Lord, more especially for defending, maintaining, and promoting the cause of religion among them? When God is pleased to make known the true religion to any nation, and to set up the ordinances of his worship among them; or when he has restored these precious privileges to them, after they have been deprived of them, what shall hinder them from entering into a *national* vow and covenant, as an expression of their gratitude and homage, to bind themselves more strictly to his service, in which they shall engage, mutually and solemnly, to preserve this invaluable treasure, to subordinate all their secular interests, laws, and administrations, to the advancement of this great end? And if their religious and civil privileges are, in any period, at stake, is it not their duty to unite in such a solemn bond for their maintenance; and will not such vows and oaths be obligatory upon them individually and collectively, politically and ecclesiastically? In this manner did the people of Israel act; in this manner does the scripture prophesy that nations would act under the New Testament; in this manner have Christian nations acted, especially since the æra of the Reformation from popery; and it will not be easy to shew that their practice was not fully consistent with reason, the word of God, and the Christian œconomy *.

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'serves them, and gives them all the blessings they enjoy. Consequently, 'they ought to reckon themselves his; and are bound to recognise this his 'title unto them solemnly, in a public capacity. Nor is this their acknow-'ledgment of him proportioned to their obligations to him unto whom they 'owe their all, unless it is as explicit as can be; which it cannot be, without 'solemn covenanting on proper occasions. God is the universal Sovereign. 'Kings are his subjects. Kingdoms are like so many individuals in his univer-'sal empire. All kingdoms are infinitely more subject to him, than any sub-'jects can be to their earthly king. All move at his pleasure. Even an Hea-'then could see this: Dan. iv. 34, 35.' Morison's Present Duty, p. 21. 22.

* 'I know (says Mr D. Wilson) it is objected by not a few in this backslid-'ing, and degenerate age, that national covenanting is not warrantable under 'the New Testament dispensation. But till it can be proved that vowing to 'the Lord is not a moral duty; that it is not a mean approved of God for awak-'ening persons to a sense of those obligations they are laid under, by the law of 'God,

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The covenants of Israel, which have been viewed by Presbyterians and Seceders as moral, and exemplary under the New Testament, were entered into, and obligatory, in a national way. Such was the covenant mentioned in Deut. xxix. as appears from the account of the persons who entered into it, as well as from the national judgments denounced against its violation: "Ye stand this day all of you "before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, "your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel; "your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in "thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer "of thy water: that thou shouldst enter into covenant with "the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy "God maketh with thee this day," ver. 10,—12. The examples of covenanting in the days of Joshua, chap. xxiv.; of Asa, 2 Chron. xv.; of Joash, 2 Kings xi. 2 Chron. xxiii.; of Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxix.; of Josiah, 2 Kings xxiii.; of Ezra, chap. x.; and of Nehemiah, chap. ix. 38. and x. 1,—29. were of the same kind. The nation, in its different ranks and orders of men, entered into these covenants, and the rulers, civil and ecclesiastical, acted an eminent part, in their stations, in promoting them. With these examples, the doctrine of the Synod will never accord. 'It has been 'seen (say they) that religious covenanting is entirely an 'ecclesiastical duty. Therefore, those invested with civil 'power have no other concern with it, than as church-mem-'bers *.' Wherever this 'has been seen' or discovered,

'God, to maintain the purity of his institutions, and walk with him in all the 'ways of holy obedience, and for exciting them to a conscientious discharge of the 'several duties incumbent on them; and that there is nothing in the word of God 'which gives us reason to expect *nations* and *kingdoms* shall be the Lord's, so as 'to distinguish themselves by a professed subjection to the Redeemer, whom 'God hath appointed king over Zion, the hill of his holiness *in a public national 'capacity*, under the New Testament œconomy,—such objections cannot have 'any weight: and indeed the proposing and urging of them, as they tend to 'obliterate any impressions of the obligation of our solemn covenant-engage-'ments to the Lord, and harden the generation in their covenant-breaking 'courses, must be considered as making no small addition to the national guilt.' Mr Wilson of London's Sermons on 'National Calamities procured by Na-'tional Sins,' p. 60. 61.

* New Testimony, p. 162.

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certain it is, that it cannot be learned from the greater number of instances in the word of God, which flatly contradict the assertion. And before we can believe that the practice of Israel, in this matter, affords no example to Christian nations, we must see better reasons than what have yet been produced, to prove that their conduct was not moral but typical *.

Christian nations are under the moral law, as well as the Jewish nation was, are bound by it to acknowledge him; and, as he has favoured them with a revelation of his will, and a dispensation of divine ordinances, they are capable of contracting such obligations, with respect to these, as result from the law of God †. The predictions of the word of God

* A writer formerly quoted grants, that the covenant engagements of Israel were strictly national as well as ecclesiastical. 'While they entered 'into covenant as a *church* (says he) they did so also as a *state*. They ac- 'knowledged JEHOVAH, both as their God and as their king.—This cove- 'nant, viewed in one light, was their national oath of allegiance.' Jamieson's Use of Sacred History, vol. i. p 359. His plea against national covenanting under the New Testament proceeds solely upon the view which he takes of Israel as a *typical* nation, and of their covenanting, which he considers, not as moral and exemplary, but as typical of, and prefiguring the engagements of the church under the New Testament. 'They in their consent to this covenant '(he says) *prefigured* the church of Christ under the New Testament.—It has 'been seen that the Israelites, in their *mixed character*, as an "holy nation," 'were not typical of any particular nation, or political body, under the New 'Testament; but that this character is exclusively transferred to the church 'of Christ. *Hence* it follows, that it is only in a religious character, or as 'members of the spiritual "commonwealth of Israel," that this duty is obli- 'gatory in our times.—Did literal Israel *prefigure* the church in their relation 'to God as their King? What is this duty, but the church's solemn recogni- 'sance of her subjection to the king of Zion, and of her cheerful submission 'to all the laws of his kingdom?' Ibid, p. 358. 360.—Until we can be persuaded that JEHOVAH, as the king of Israel, was a *type* of Christ, as king of Zion, we must be excused from believing that the covenants of Israel were *typical* of those of the church under the New Testament; and, in the mean time, must, with the soundest Presbyterians, look upon them as moral and religious. The arguments founded upon the idea of the *typical nation* and *church* of Israel, as urged by Mr Glass, (who, in his *Narrative* and *Testimony of the King of Martyrs*, has stated them with as great ingenuity and force as any that have succeeded), are examined in the following among other Tracts; Review of a Paper against the Solemn League; an Essay on the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant; and A Defence of National Churches.

† 'The first command (says Mr Willison), requires Israel, as a Nation, to 'chuse, acknowledge, and avouch the Lord to be their God; as well as every 'particular person within it; the command speaks, *De singulis generum, et de* '*generibus*

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God with respect to the New Testament, intimate that cities and nations should join themselves to the Lord, and attest their allegiance and homage, by vowing and swearing unto him, Isa. xix. 18,—21. Zech. ii. 11. Rev. xi. 15.—predictions which, not excluding other instances, received a very striking accomplishment in the public and solemn covenants, oaths, and vows, by which the Reformation was accompanied and promoted in this and other Protestant nations.

The view which we have given of the public covenants of Britain, in their nature and obligation, is the same with that which has all along been entertained by their friends in the three kingdoms, since the period of their formation. We shall here produce only a few of the numerous proofs of this which are at hand. The Assembly of Divines at Westminster, in their exhortation to the taking of the *Solemn League*, assert, that it is substantially the same with that vow and solemn protestation which had been formerly made by the parliament of England, and, by their authority, throughout the kingdom. 'What is there almost in this 'covenant (say they) which was not, for substance, either 'expressed, or manifestly included in the solemn protestation of May 5, 1641, wherein *the whole kingdom* stands *engaged* until this day? the sinful neglect whereof doth, as 'we may justly fear, open one flood-gate the more to let in 'all these calamities upon the kingdom, and cast upon it a 'necessity of *renewing covenant*, and of entering into this.' For understanding this, it must be observed, that the Par-

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'*generibus singulorum*. Now, the law that respects one nation as such, respects 'every nation. And though every nation have not a discovery of the Lord's 'respect to them by a voice from heaven, as Israel had; yet that doth not 'alter their duty, nor loose them from the obligation of a moral precept; and 'especially those nations to whom God, in his wonderful mercy, is pleased to 'send his glorious gospel, with a commission to his ambassadors to disciple 'nations as well as individuals.'—He illustrates this also from the second and third commandments. Of the last he says, 'This command is also directed 'to Israel in a National capacity, Deut. v. 11. and afterwards more particularly explained, with respect to the case of covenanting with God, Deut. x. '20. *Thou shalt cleave to him, and swear by his name.* See Psalm lxxvi. 11.' Defence of National Churches, p. 14, 15. See also Willison's Afflicted Man's Companion, Preface.

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liament, and particularly the House of Commons, on different occasions, when religion was endangered by the introduction of superstitious observances, Arminian doctrines, and Popish plots, entered into a solemn protestation and promise, in which they avouched their adherence to the Protestant religion, rejected the contrary errors, and engaged to maintain the former, and oppose the latter. One of these was made in the year 1628 *. The other in 1641, mentioned above, was more full and solemn; it originated in the House of Commons, was sworn by the House of Lords, and, by their joint authority, throughout the nation †. A similar oath was, on the 18th of August, sworn by the Parliament of Scotland, and appointed to be afterwards taken by all members, before they should be permitted to vote ‡. Again, in June 1643, on occasion of the discovery of a treacherous plot against the Parliament and city of London, a solemn vow and covenant was sworn by both Houses §. These deeds were all previous

* See Rushworth's Collections ad ann. 1628. Collier's Eccl. hist. of Britain, vol. ii. p. 747. Neal's history of the Puritans, vol. ii. p. 187. Toulmin's edition.

† It runs in the following terms 'I, — do, in the presence of Almighty God, 'promise, vow, and protest, to maintain and defend, as far as lawfully I may, 'with my life, power, and estate, the true reformed Protestant religion, &c. 'also the power and privileges of parliament, &c. and neither for hope, &c. 'shall relinquish this promise, vow, and protestation.' The oath may be seen at length, by those who have not access to the records of the period, in Moncrieff's Practical works, vol. ii. p. 139. and in Free Thoughts on the Toleration of Popery, p. 441. See also Baillie's Letters, vol. i. p. 295, 297. Neal, ut supra, vol. iii. p. 60. 61.

‡ See Rescinded Acts, apud ann. 1641. A Collection of Laws in favour of the Reformation in Scotland, p. 80. Baillie's Letters, vol. i. p. 323.

§ The following are extracts from the public papers respecting this important transaction: 'Tuesday, 6th June. The House of Commons, in a full 'house, after hearing the report of the Committee respecting the late treasonous plot, had a large debate concerning a former motion, very needful 'and of great concernment at the time, for the parliament and whole kingdom 'to enter into a *solemn covenant*,' Perfect Diurnal, No. 52. 'The said house 'presently entered into a *solemn vow and covenant* to defend the true reformed 'protestant religion, and the liberty of the subject. The covenant was solemnly taken by all the said House, only sixteen of them desired a day or 'two to think of it, which was granted them,' Certain Informations, No 21. 'The Lord's fully concurred with the Commons.—The freemen of the city 'of London, assembled in the Guildhall, cheerfully swore it. It was ordered 'to be sent to the army; and to the Earl of Warwick, to be tendered to all 'the navy at sea, and a speedy course taken to have the whole kingdom enter 'into the same.'—The covenant did run in the following terms: 'Whereas 'there

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previous to the *Solemn League and Covenant*, which was framed upon the same principles, and for similar purposes, although more extensive, both as to its matter, and the solemn, public, and national manner in which it was enacted, sworn, and repeatedly ratified.

The judgment of Mr Crofton, one of the ministers of England, may be produced in the name of all the rest, as he has their concurrence to his opinion. In support of his opinion, that the Solemn League and Covenant was 'public 'and *national*, binding the *power* and *body politic* of the 'nation,' he produces the following unanswerable arguments. 'First, the *matter* therein covenanted is public and 'national, relating to the kingdom under its *civil*, *religious*, 'and *reformed* consideration and *capacity*, being the reformation and defence of religion under a *national profession*, &c. 2. These matters, and the form of security to 'them, were consulted, debated, and concluded by two distinct nations—and that in their *most public capacities*, &c. '3. The terms, shewing the *capacity* in which it was sworn, 'are—national, &c. 4. The end and scope of the covenant 'was real, national, &c. 5. This covenant was sworn by 'the nation or kingdom. (1.) Collectively, by the body of 'the nations, regularly assembled and constituted, in the 'most full and compleat assembly—The *Parliament*, consisting of Lords and Commons, and that in their public 'capacity, *as a Parliament*, did, *as the representative body* 'of the kingdom, swear this covenant, which, as a further 'testimony

'there hath been, and now is, in this kingdom, a Popish and treacherous plot 'for the subversion of the true protestant reformed religion, and the liberty of 'the subject, &c. I,—in humility and reverence of the divine majesty, de-'clare my hearty sorrow for mine own sins, and the sins of the nation, which 'have deserved the calamities that now ly upon it; and my true intention is, 'by God's grace, to endeavour the amendment of my own ways; and I do 'further, in the presence of Almighty God, *declare*, *vow*, and *covenant*, that, in 'order to the security and preservation of the true reformed protestant reli-'gion, and liberty of the subject, I will not consent to the laying down of arms, 'so long as, &c. And that I do abhor and detest the said wicked and treach-'erous design, and that I never gave, nor will give my assent to the execution 'thereof,' &c &c. The Kingdoms Weekly Intelligencer, from 6th to 13th June, 1643. See also Rushworth's Collections, vol. v. p. 325.

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'testimony that it was a *National Covenant*, they caused it 'to be hanged up in all churches, and in their own house, 'as a compass whereby (in conformity to right reason and 'religion) to steer their own debates, and to dictate to all 'that should succeed into *that place* and *capacity*, what ob-'ligation did before God lie upon the body of the nation. '(2.) It was universally sworn by the people of this king-'dom—and that, not at their own will and giddy humour, 'but at the command and by the authority of Parliament. '(3.) The Solemn League and Covenant hath been *ratified* 'and rendered national—and that by a series of multiplied 'acts.' From these 'public considerations and palpable 'engagements made by the people of England, as a kingdom 'and political body, professing the Reformed religion,' he concludes, that 'it is a public *national* covenant, binding 'all the persons of this nation (that swear or swear not 'personally), and our posterity after us; and all that shall 'succeed unto the *public places* and *politic capacities* of this 'kingdom, to preserve and pursue the things therein pro-'mised.—Least you or any others (adds he) should think, 'this quality of the Solemn League and Covenant, as pub-'lic and national, to be my own notion, and private par-'ticular fancy; give me leave to tell you and them, I can 'produce more than 600 ministers (most of whom are yet 'living in the kingdom of England), who under their hand 'have testified their apprehensions of it under the same no-'tion *.'

Mr Brown of *Wamphray*, in his Apology for the Church of Scotland, may safely be viewed as expressing the sentiments of the ministers of that church; and he maintains the obligation of the National Covenant of Scotland, and the League of the three kingdoms, upon the same broad principles, and to the same extent, with Mr Crofton. We shall not

* Crofton's Fastening of St Peter's Fetters, or the efficacy and extent of the Solemn League asserted and vindicated, p. 138,—146. See also the Covenanter's Plea against Absolvers, by Mess. Calamy, Vines, and Baxter, Epist. Dedic. and chap. ii. iv. And the various Testimonies of the Ministers of England against the Sectaries and the execution of Charles I.

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not repeat these, nor his illustrations, but content ourselves with quoting his conclusion. 'These oaths (says he) being 'regal oaths, parliamentary oaths, and national oaths and cove- 'nants, they must be covenants perpetually obliging; so that as 'long as Scotland hath a king or a parliament; yea tho' there 'should be none of those, this obligation would stand, be- 'cause *mutato capite, maneret idem corpus, the subject would 'be permanent;* and therefore the faith of Scotland being 'engaged, so long as Scotland is Scotland, the engagement 'standeth, and will not be dissolved.—The *public faith* of 'Scotland being engaged by all persons in all capacities, as 'long as there are any Scotishmen to succeed in these ca- 'pacities the obligation standeth *.' Such also were the sentiments of Presbyterians about the time of the Revolution. 'The binding force of these engagements (says Prin- 'cipal Forrester), appears in the subjects they affect, as (1.) 'Our church in her representatives, and in their most pub- 'lic capacity; the solemn assemblies in both nations. (2.) 'State representatives, and parliament. Thus all assu- 'rances are given that either civil or ecclesiastical laws 'can afford; and the *public faith* of *church* and *state* is 'plighted with inviolable ties: so that they must stand, 'while we have a church or state in Scotland. Both as '*men* and as *Christians*, as members of *church* and *state*, 'under either a *religious* or *civil* consideration, we stand 'hereby *inviolably engaged:* and not only representatives, 'but also the incorporation of church and state are under 'the same †.'

When Mr Glass began, about the year 1725, to oppose *national covenanting*, and national churches, as inconsistent with the spirituality of Christ's kingdom ‡, (for which he was afterwards censured by the judicatories of the national church), a number of the ministers of the church of Scotland distinguished themselves by writing in defence of our covenants, all of whom vindicated them upon the principles above

* Brown's Apologetical Relation, p. 343.
† Forrester's Rectius Instruendum, Confut. Dial. 2nd.
‡ See Page 58. of this Statement.

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above stated. The sentiments of Mr Willison of Dundee, who was a strenuous opponent of Mr Glass, have been already quoted*. 'What should hinder (says another writer of that period), 'the members of a nation, commonwealth, or kingdom, who 'are at the same time members of a church, to enter into 'a covenant with God, to obey him as Christians in their 'their several stations, to maintain truth of doctrine and 'purity of ordinances as a church, and also to preserve 'their rights, privileges, and liberties as a commonwealth, 'at the same time? May not this be done without *sinfully* 'blending the church and commonwealth?—Only here he '(Mr Glass) should know and notice, that it is not a covenant '*purely ecclesiastic*, nor *purely civil*, but a general covenant, 'wherein persons of all sorts do join, yet each in his own 'station†.'—'As for its being a church-covenant (says a 'third writer), I do not understand how this notion of the 'author's will suit therewith, it being not *simpliciter* ecclesiastic, but rather a national promissory oath, required 'and imposed by the legislative power on the subjects of 'those three nations‡.'

Such also are the views which Seceders have entertained respecting these covenants, and their obligation. While they pleaded the lawfulness and duty of their renewal of them in a bond suited to their ecclesiastical capacity, and vindicated covenanting in this view §, they, at the same time,

* See p. 186, 187. of this Statement.

† Review of a paper written against our National and Solemn League and Covenant, p. 47, 50

‡ Letter to a minister in the country, asserting the National Covenant, &c. See also Mr Hog's (of Carnock) Letter to Lady C——. And his Letter concerning our Sacred National Covenants.

§ This consideration fully accounts for certain expressions in the Sermons and other writings of Seceders, which have been improved by some to fix upon them the sentiment, that religious covenants are wholly ecclesiastical. Discourses preached by them upon occasions of covenanting were adapted to the particular manner in which the duty was performed among them, that is, as a church. Whenever some persons hear of covenanting by a church as such, they seem to take it for granted that there can be no other mode of it in any circumstances; and when they hear of covenants being binding upon us as church-members, they immediately draw the inference, that they are binding in that character only, and that they are, in their own nature, wholly ecclesiastical.—The expressions, *only*, *wholly*, or *entirely*, are overlooked, although the hinge of the present controversy turns upon them.

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time, approved of 'the old form of the covenants,' as adapted to the circumstances of our ancestors, and maintained their obligation, in the most extensive sense, upon the nation and church. 'The Solemn League and Covenant (says 'Mr Moncrieff)—sworn both by Scotland and England— 'was a lawful and laudable association of these kingdoms, 'for promoting true religion, for preferring the glory of 'God, the increase of Christ's kingdom, to all things in the 'world, and subordinating all things thereto, and to the will 'of God revealed in his word. It was a professed subjection of *the three nations* to Christ, &c. Now this oath and 'vow being so lawful, laudable, and warrantable, it is certainly binding on us, whether we come under it in our own 'persons or not; as much as the oath made by Joshua, and 'the princes of the congregation of Israel, to the Gibeonites, 'was binding upon their posterity.—Nations continue to 'subsist in their posterity; and so national vows are binding on posterity*.' 'Our solemn national vows and engagements to the Most High (says Mr Mair), are not only practically broken by particular persons; not only publicly and nationally broken—but, what shall we say! even 'attacked, reproached, and condemned, by some of those 'whose work and duty it is to hold the crown on Christ's 'head, and maintain his royalty, and plead our allegiance 'to him in this land.'—That nations may warrantably enter into vows and covenants, he proves, '(1.) from scripture-promises concerning New Testament times; (2.) from the 'moral nature of the duty; (3.) from the nature of that 'society which we call a nation.—We may here (says he) 'consider a nation distributively, for every particular member of a nation, or the generality of them. 2. Collectively, 'as the nation representative, viz. the rulers of the nation, 'as representing and acting in the name of those under their 'charge, and in their station above others where they are. 'And in *each* of these *capacities*, it is the duty of a nation

* Moncrieff's (of Culfargie) Practical Works, vol. i. p. 294. vol. ii. p. 63. see also p. 54, 61, 62.

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'to vow and engage unto the Lord *.' Mr Gellatly, one of the first ministers missioned by the Synod to America, has decidedly expressed the same sentiment. Persons (says he) 'do but thresh the water, in attempting to loose *the three* '*lands* on earth from the obligation of these vows, till they 'document, by good proof, on which the consciences of men 'may safely rest, that God has loosed them in heaven; lest he 'that sits there laugh at, and hold in derision such vain 'attempts.—We find it is a maxim of the English law, that '*a society dieth not*. *Church* and *state*, who entered into these 'vows were, and as yet, (the Lord knows how long) are 'not extinct. Mr Forrester, late Principal of the college 'of St Andrews, handles this point *so well* by rational ar-'guments, supported by scripture, that I shall only lay be-'fore the reader the heads of his argumentation †.' Upon which he adds an extract, including the words which we have already quoted from that author (p. 191.); strongly expressive of the obligation of the covenants on the body politic and ecclesiastical. Our covenants, National and Solemn League (says Mr Morison), 'were *National Vows*. The 'National Covenant was frequently sworn by almost all 'the people of Scotland. The Solemn League was sworn 'by persons of all ranks in Scotland, England, and Ireland. 'The kingdom of Scotland went most voluntarily into it. 'It was taken by both houses of parliament in England; 'by a goodly number of the nobility; by the Westminster 'assembly;

* Mair's Sermons on Jer. l. 4, 5. p. 2, 104, 110. on the argument from 'the 'nature of Society,' the Author says, 'This truth may be illustrated from the 'consideration of the institution and design of even civil society. *The powers that 'be, are ordained of God*, Rom. xiii. 1. He has set them up; as he has made man, 'and so given him a personal being, so he has made civil society, and given men 'a civil and political life. Hence it is evident, that as particular persons are called 'to pay this homage to the Lord, because he has made them, and given them 'all the blessings, real or spiritual, that they enjoy; so whatever societies God 'has set up, are called, as such, to pay even this homage to him for their being 'as a society, and for all the blessings that, as such, they enjoy. Thus as to 'families, cities, provinces, nations,' &c. Ibid, p. 105.

† Gellatly's Observations on the Detection dectected, Epist. p. 3—5. printed at Germantown, 1758. The same Author quotes from Mr Willison's preface to the Afflicted Man's Companion in support of the magistrate's power *circa sacra*.

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'assembly; by the city of London, by a great part of the 'ministry; and by considerable numbers through the whole 'kingdom. This made it a *national* oath, or vow. *The 'public faith was hereby plighted,* for a genuine and tho- 'rough reformation, in the doctrine, worship, discipline, 'and government of the house of God. Now, you know, 'when the public faith is given to any neighbouring king- 'dom, for standing true to certain articles of peace and 'friendship; it is, in all equity, judged to be binding on 'every individual in the nation, as in the oath sworn by 'the princes of Israel to the Gibeonites: Just so here; the 'Solemn League being a plighting the public faith to God, 'it must be binding on all, Deut. xxix. 14, 15. And as nations 'continue to subsist in their posterity; so national vows must 'be binding on posterity: We are still *the same kingdom;* and '*therefore* the Solemn League, being a national vow, must be 'binding on us as well as it was on the very persons who swore it *.'

The sentiments which the Synod have now adopted respecting covenanting, and points connected with it, and which they have embodied into their new deeds and terms of communion, are substantially the same with the sentiments of a number, both ministers and people, who, at different periods, have deserted the cause of the Secession, or been censured by its judicatories on account of them. In particular, Mr Scott of Dundee and Mr Arthur of Dumbarrow, for stating and refusing to retract a paper of objections, chiefly directed against the covenants as *national,* and against the magistrate's power about religion, were suspended from the ministry; and, for persisting in the maintenance of this cause, Mr Scott was afterwards deposed by the Synod. These principles are not the less inconsistent with the cause of the covenanted Reformation, and of the Secession, because they are now adopted by the majority of the Synod, or because, by the prejudice of authority, artful glosses, and general ambiguous declarations, they endeavour to per-

* Morison's Present Duty, p. 74. and his attempt to vindicate, &c. the duty of renewing our Solemn Covenants, p. 56.

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suade the world that they are consistent. The extracts at the foot of the page will shew that the views, objections, topics of argument, and declamation, and even modes of expression, which were adopted by Mr Scott, are the very same which are now embraced by the Synod, and employed by the friends of their New Testimony *.

This

* 'While the renovation of the covenants was in agitation here (says Mr 'Scott, in his account of the difference between him and the Synod), I had no 'objection to public covenanting, or religious vowing and swearing in general, '—provided it was properly stated and managed; the matter of the oath or 'covenant plain and easily understood, and also clearly adapted to the genius 'of the Christian religion, and church state. But I came to conceive a dislike 'of, at least to be difficulted about, the state of covenanting as *national properly 'so called*, or as a taking in the nation in its *national capacity*; apprehending 'that to have a native tendency to an undue blending of the kingdom of 'Christ and the kingdoms of this world, and the peculiar interests of the one 'and the other, as is evidently the case in the national covenants of these 'lands, upon which Seceders have taken up their standing. When, therefore, I had occasion to speak of that matter, *I took it off the national plan*, and 'viewed it as belonging *to the churches* of the saints, and members thereof 'as such, and *as distinct from the civil state*. But I soon came to learn, that 'this view of it would not satisfy those I was connected with, at least the 'leading men among them.' Relating a conversation between him and a member of Synod, he says, 'After some altercation concerning these things, 'he told me, it seemed we were not for covenanting; and therefore were of 'different principles from the Synod,—which also he had before alledged with 'regard to the civil magistrate's power circa sacra. To which I answered, 'that I never heard any of our people declare against covenanting, or public 'religious vowing and swearing in general; although I understood, not a few 'of them were scrupled at the present mode of it in the Secession.' To 'which he replied, it is not enough although we should be for covenanting 'of some sort (for, said he on another occasion, the Independents themselves 'will admit of a sort of church covenants), if we be not for *national covenanting as such*; that being the covenanting espoused and contended for by the 'Synod, even such covenanting as was promoted in the period between 1638 'and 1650. After conversing a little concerning national covenanting as 'such, I told him, that I thought *we need not give ourselves much trouble on 'that score, until we saw a nation duly qualified for it*,' p. 55, 56.

'The difference (says he) which took place between the Seceders and me, 'or the prosecution which they came to carry on against me,—did not, pro'perly speaking, turn upon any one point of doctrine (if you except that of 'the civil magistrate's power *circa sacra*, and *speculations* and points therewith 'connected), or of church discipline and government; but upon matters, for 'the most part, somewhat political, wherein either the faith and holiness of 'the gospel, or the appointed discipline of Christ's church, has no manner of 'concern.' In answer to a charge brought against him, that his 'scruples 'concerning the civil magistrate's power *circa sacra*, and things connected 'therewith, were against the principles of our Presbyterian and covenanting an'cestors on those points, and must land him in Independency;' Mr Scott says, almost in the very words which are now current among Seceders, 'I cannot 'help being surprized that a zealous advocate for the divine right of Presby-

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This is no speculative question, but a practical point of deep and serious consideration. If ever oaths and covenants were binding upon any nation or kingdom, this kingdom must be bound: never were covenants entered into, never were oaths sworn, with greater formality and solemnity, nor more expressly and repeatedly ratified and approved by all authorities in a land. Have we not reason to conclude, that all attempts to fritter down, explain away, and limit the obligation of these covenants, by distinctions invented after

'tery would so express himself; for to me it appears to be, upon the matter, 'a yielding of that important cause; or, at least, giving a mighty handle unto 'those of the congregational way. If there be a necessary connection between 'Presbyterian church-government, and the things which I proposed scruples at 'under this head; then it is beyond all doubt, that, for the first 300 years, 'that could not be the form of government which obtained in the churches of 'Christ,—because during that space of time, the powers were not Christian; 'and, of consequence, the things there scrupled at could not take place. But, 'as the disputes about *church government*, or any particular form thereof, *did not 'enter into my case with the Seceders;* I shall leave this matter to be settled 'and adjusted between him and the Independents—According to any views 'that I have attained unto (it is hoped, from the scriptures), of the spiritual 'nature of the church and kingdom of Christ in general, with its distinc-'tion from the kingdoms of this world—though it should be made ever so 'clear, that my scruples, under that head, have a tendency to land me in Inde-'pendency, I would not be able, just on that account, to give up with said scru-'ples. After all, I am not yet certain if there be a necessary connection between 'these scruples and independency, properly so called. Yea, what if I should be 'able to shew, that sundry very learned clergymen of the church of England, 'by law established, have gone fully as far in objecting unto the commonly-'received doctrine, concerning the civil magistrate's power, in or about the 'church of Christ, as ever I have done? and sure these were no Independents.— 'But what mighty sounds are these? Independent! Sectarian! Latitudinarian! &c. 'so much and and so successfully used by the leaders in the Secession. Who 'can stand before, or resist the force of them? Where is the doubt they must 'not solve? the argument they must not set aside?'

Take another specimen: 'Our scruples, or objections, impugn received prin-'ciples.—But why is such an uncommon, such a disproportionate stress laid on 'the word *received?* The question is here mis-stated. It is not—Has such a 'thing been received? but—Ought it to have been received? Is it a scripture-'truth? &c.—According to this plea, or maxim, reformation could never have 'taken place in any church.—This would put an effectual stop to further refor-'mation in all the protestant churches. And further, by whom are the things 'objected to received," &c. &c. Scott's Account of the difference between him and the Antiburgher Seceders, p. 8, 29, 30, 70, 71.

These quotations need no comment or application. *Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur.* The reader must perceive at once the exact correspondence between these sentiments and modes of reasoning, and those which are now used in the Synod. When old errors are revived, the same manner of defence will be unconsciously adopted. A person may desire to conceal the country, or the province, to which he belongs, but his language and dialect will bewray him.

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after the solemn pledges had been given, unwarranted by scripture, and contrary to the common sentiments of mankind with respect to lawful oaths and covenants, must be highly displeasing to that MAJESTY whose name was invoked, and whose honour and interests were immediately concerned in the transactions? For our part, we have protested, and continue to protest against such doctrine, as calculated to harden those who have lost all sense of these engagements, to obliterate or weaken remaining impressions of them upon the minds of others, and to hasten the judgments of God upon our land; and we feel a satisfaction in having exonered our consciences in this matter, which more than compensates for all the obloquy with which we have been loaded.

CONCLUSION.

We have thus given a candid statement of the principal grounds of difference between the Synod and us, and a brief view of the reasons why we cannot renounce the common sentiments of Presbyterians and Protestants on the different articles, nor adopt the opposite tenets embraced by the Synod. We have been studious not to misrepresent the sentiments of our opponents; and have endeavoured to distinguish such inferences as are avowed or admitted by them, from others which we consider as fairly and necessarily deducible from the principles which they have adopted. But, in examining or opposing any set of opinions, we must look farther than the present views and intentions of those who abet them: principles will operate according to their nature and tendency; and although some may, from various causes, be prevented from embracing all their consequences, they will not fail to produce their full effect upon others.

It was intended to have subjoined to this statement, an account of the censures which the Synod have proceeded to

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to inflict, on account of the part which we have been obliged to act in this affair; together with our reasons for holding these to be altogether invalid and unconstitutional. But as it would have extended the present work, and, by the introduction of additional matter, have served to distract the reader's attention, we have resolved to detach this, and to reserve it for separate publication. The cause of injured truth deserves the first attention; and when it has suffered so grievously, it is a small matter that our characters and conduct should, for a little, be exposed to the aspersions and misrepresentations which the ignorant, the interested, or the prejudiced, have so industriously circulated. In the mean time, the following plain corrolaries natively arise from the preceding statement.

1. That we, and all who were resolved to adhere to the original principles and common profession of the body, had the fullest right, and were under the most indispensible obligations, to continue this adherence, and to maintain communion only upon the original terms; rejecting the new Testimony, and terms of communion obtruded by the Synod.

2. That we had the fullest warrant to associate for the observance of all the ordinances of Christ, and in the use of all the means appointed by him, for maintaining that Testimony which the Synod had deserted; or, in other words, to associate as office-bearers of his house, in a presbyterial capacity, for supporting, as far as in our power, the cause of the Reformation and the Secession, and for giving relief to those who could not follow the Synod in their course of apostacy, nor countenance ordinances dispensed under a banner opposite to that by which they were solemnly engaged to abide.

3. That the Synod, having deserted their former Testimony, and adopted a new scheme of principles, inconsistent with and eversive of it, did arrogate *unconstitutional powers*, in pretending to exercise jurisdiction over, and inflict censures upon persons who were resolved to adhere to their profession, and were only taking necessary measures for its maintenance. They could have no claims upon, nor

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nor power over those who never submitted to their new constitution, nor came under any obligations unto them, as settled upon it. They hereby forfeited all plea of consistency, as well as became guilty of gross tyranny, by not only claiming and exercising a right to themselves to change and new-model their profession, but also attempting, (in glaring contradiction to their principles) to compel ministers, under the highest censures, to follow them in their course of apostacy. Nay, by breaking their own ordination vows, following a divisive course from the principles of the reformed church of Scotland, casting a stumbling-block before the body of the people, and "causing divi-"sions and offences contrary to the doctrine which they had "received,"—they had placed themselves in a state of scandal, and were, according to the apostolical injunction, to be "marked and avoided *." All this is independent of the breaches of Presbyterian, and even common order, the haste, and violence, which have been manifested in the whole of these processes, if processes they could be called.

The Secession-body was organised with a special view to maintain and revive the interests of the Reformation in Britain, as formerly attained by the merciful hand of God, and ratified by the most solemn pledges and securities. Considering their professions and engagments, it was their eminent duty to have guarded that cause, specially committed to their trust, at a time when a strong tide of opposition had set in against it from different quarters, and when Sectarian principles, which formerly had contributed to its overthrow, were prevailing to a degree hitherto unexampled in Scotland. When, instead of defending, they have betrayed it, yielded up, and attempted to demolish the bulwarks erected for its defence; when they have taken up, sharpened, and directed against it, through the sides of its friends, the arrows which its most embittered enemies have formerly employed; how can this fail, to be displeasing to God? "The children of Ephraim being "armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.

"They

* Rom. xvi. 17.

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"They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk "in his law: and forgat his works, and his wonders that he "had shewed them," Psal. lxxviii. 9, 10, 11. When they forget one principal end of their erection, and cease to perform that service for which they were preserved in a separate state, there is ground to fear that the righteous Lord may be provoked to give them up, and that they may become more unserviceable to the interests of religion than other societies; like the vine-tree, mentioned by the prophet, from which wood cannot be taken "to do any work" nor "a pin "of it to hang any vessel thereon."

The preservation of the doctrines of salvation, and of practical religion, is a primary duty, and those churches which have lost these, have lost their glory, whatever exterior advantages they may enjoy. But these interests cannot be expected to flourish, while faithfulness and integrity as to the public state of religion are not maintained. Nor is it the first time that evangelical doctrine and practical religion have been extolled, to the disparagement of contendings for other truths and duties which were immediately opposed; and that the attention of church-members has been called to these, in order to divert them from "the present truth," and to enable the ruling party peaceably to conduct their plans.

Peace is always desirable in itself, and the peace of the church ought to be earnestly pursued. But the cry of peace is often employed by those who are engaged in courses of defection, in order to drown all opposition to their measures; and not infrequently those are loudest in proclaiming the evils of division and schism, who are themselves chargeable with them*, and who are pushing new schemes de-

 structive

* 'Some cry out, O division, division; such and such men are for nothing 'but schism and division! But when defection becomes general, division be-'comes a necessary duty and a great mercy; otherwise all would run down 'into the gulph of defection together, making peace and pretensions to bro-'therly love, a grave for burying all zeal for God, and his truths and inter-'est. If Christ's householders have not salt in themselves, as he commands, 'Mark ix. 50. how can they have peace one with another, unless it be a peace 'without

structive of peace and unity, as already settled in societies, or which sow the seeds of future dissentions and endless separation. These, instead of laying a solid foundation for peace, will foment discord, and breed confusions; as the Romans built a temple to *Concord* in the spot where the seditions of the Gracchi had been committed, which, in future times, instead of restraining, was the means of exciting to tumults and bloodshed.

Let none be moved by confident assertions, that the matters now in dispute are of small moment. Although they were allowed to be so, this would be no good reason for tamely relinquishing them; and Christ puts his servants to a more eminent test of fidelity, in requiring them to adhere to these when they are opposed *.—The fact is, that every truth, during the time that it was controverted, has been uniformly represented by its opponents as inconsiderable and minute; and very frequently, through the artful management of the erroneous, and by the permission of God, for the trial of his church, the controversy has been made to turn upon a point apparently narrow. 'There was

without the salt of truth, like the peace of a dunghill, where every particle 'doth but corrupt one another? Peace without truth being but a confederacy 'against heaven: Suspect their honesty who cry out, O the schism and di-'vision of the day! but never a word of the corruptions and defections thereof. 'Who are the schismatics in Scotland? These that adhere to the covenanted 'reformation thereof, founded on the word of God, or these that are razing 'a covenanted work of reformation to the ground? Suppose a company walk-'ing on a road by the side of a ditch, most of them fall into the ditch, and 'then cry to their fellows, if you come not here, and join with us, we will 'charge you with schism and division; how ridiculous would that accusation 'be! Surely these may be said to go out of the house, who go out of the 'way of the house, out of the order, rule, and government of the house: But 'these may be said, properly, to come into the house, and abide in it, who 'abide by the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the house, &c.' R Erskine's Sermon on Luke xiv. 23. as quoted by Mr Muckarsie in 'Truth 'and Peace Vindicated,' p. 168.'

* 'Truths comparatively small (says Mr Fleming), may be great in their 'season, when they are the word of his patience; yea, we may say the *lesser* 'it seems, and of *mean* value with many, it makes the Christian's adherence 'thereto a *greater* testimony. It is clear what a close concatenation there is 'amongst the truths of God held forth in the scripture, that one part thereof 'cannot be reached without a special prejudice to the whole; yea, it may be 'said, every corruption of the truth hath an aim at the very soul of religion, 'by a direct tendency thereto.' Fulfilling of the Scriptures, p. 411, 412. edit. 1671.

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'was never a trial yet in the church (says Mr Livingston), 'but in the time of it, it was brought to a seemingly *small* 'thing. Satan can put the trial on such a frame, he can 'draw it to such a point, and set it, as they say, *in aciem* '*novaculæ, like a razor's edge.* Yet still, though there 'seems but little between the two, the one side is a deny-'ing of Christ, and the other a confessing of him.'

But however the ignorant, or the interested, may affect to talk, the present controversy is neither speculative nor unimportant. Speculative it cannot be, in whatever light it be viewed. It directly affects the interests of religion and morality. All the questions which have been brought into dispute are of the practical kind: they either respect relations which presently subsist among men, duties to be performed, and sins which are committed; or they relate to particular and solemn engagements under which the nation lies, or which particular churches have come under. The new opinions, if reduced to practice, must be productive of the most baleful consequences. They are injurious to society; and would have a most unhappy influence upon the general interests of religion, and upon practical godliness, by removing all external restraints from the conduct of men with respect to religion, and giving equal countenance to the most false and corrupt systems, with the pure system of Christianity and the Reformation. In addition to what we have formerly stated, respecting the tendency of these opinions, (p. 23,—29, 156, 160.), the reader will see in the note the judgment of one who was eminently distinguished for his regard to practical religion *.

* 'What can we reckon it but another subtile stratagem of that envious ene-'my of our happy Reformation, who, when he sees it not practicable to get 'the Beast's wound healed, by making direct attacks upon it, and the great 'truths thereby established, goes about to make breaches in the necessary 'hedges of order and government, and would throw down all the valuable 'fences of these truths; such as *National Churches, Confessions of Faith, Covenants,* '*Formulas, Human Laws, Penal Statutes, Acts of Parliament, Defensive Arms* '*in Favours of religion, the Magistrate's Power* CIRCA SACRA, *The Power and* '*Authority of Synods and Church-judicatures over Pastors and single Congregations.* 'And in order to get these Ramparts of our Reformation the more effectually 'demolished

The methods which are employed for injuring the cause of religion are very different, and apparently opposite, at different periods. It is the part of true and Christian wisdom to discern "the signs of the times," and the quarter from which immediate danger is to be dreaded. A mistake here is productive of the worst consequences; and to this our errors may be traced. The church in this land was once severely tried by the scourge of open persecution, and forcible imposition on consciences. This trial has for a long time ceased; and religion is endangered by other means. The engine of persecution having lost its force, or failed to produce its effect, the grand enemy of the church is employing other methods for gaining his ends. If he cannot carry the citadel by force, he will attempt it by negociation, will commence the herald of toleration and liberty of conscience, and persuade Christians to demolish those outworks by which their privileges were guarded, to remove all external

'demolished, the most taking and plausible pretexts are invented for catching 'serious people; such as, "what are all these but the inventions of men? There "is no warrant for them in the New Testament, they are inconsistent with "the nature of Christ's kingdom, which he hath declared to be no longer now of "this world; Instead of advancing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, they hinder "the shining of it in its native lustre; his spiritual kingdom is not to be sup-"ported or promoted by means of earthly power, or by the wisdom and poli-"cy of this world &c." But whatever specious words of this kind be brought 'forth, it is easy to make it appear, that these things now impugned, are sufficiently warranted both by the word of God and sound reason, and are means 'which God hath blessed both for preserving and promoting religion and reformation. O! that these who seem to be otherwise minded had their eyes 'opened to these things, and the native consequences of their present course, 'before it be too late.

'There are some errors, which though they do not in themselves so immediately strike against our great *fundamental truths*, yet they touch them 'very nearly, and lay them open to be attacked and overthrown. Such are 'these errors which strike against the government and discipline of the church, 'and other preservatives of truth; particularly the maintaining of the error of 'a general toleration, and the unwarrantableness of National Covenants, Confessions, Formulas, the Magistrates power *circa sacra*, &c. I say these principles have a most dangerous and damnable tendency, seeing they strike against all our excellent fences of truth, yea against our glorious Reformation 'and Revolution, which were brought about by God's wonder-working hand. 'In a word, the Devil cannot take a shorter course to undo religion, or to let 'in a hellish flood of *Arianism*, *Popery*, *Deism*, or *Atheism* among us, than by 'propagating such principles. How then can any heart that is zealous for 'God, but loath and abhor them?' Willison's Defence of National Churches, p. 4, 5, 23.

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ternal barriers and restraints, and grant the same free scope and countenance unto his kingdom, in its various forms of idolatry, superstition, infidelity, damnable errors and delusions, that are granted to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. It is the master-piece of his art to prevail upon the friends of religion, with whatever views, to promote the same design with the emissaries of antichrist and the apostles of infidelity. It is affecting to think, that in a Testimony, emitted by an ecclesiastical court, professedly adapted to the times, and which treats of the duty of rulers with reference to religion, although profanation of the Sabbath, and other irreligious practices, abound so greatly among us, yet there should not be one word, from the beginning of it to the end, which teaches that civil authority should restrain these, nor the least hint respecting the nation's guilt or danger from the increase of these evils, as produced by the relaxation in the execution of salutary laws against them; and, though Popery has in various ways obtained the countenance of public authority, and the most strenuous attempts have of late years been made to have all restraints in the way of its propagation removed, that these should not have the slightest place in an acknowledgement of public sins. In these respects, we have ground to fear that the sore judgment which is written in the prophets has fallen upon us: "The Lord hath poured out upon you the "spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; the pro- "phets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered," Isa. xxix. 10. "Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things "for thee; and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to "turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false bur- "dens, and causes of banishment," Lam. ii. 14. "And my "people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end "thereof?" Jer. v. 31.

The present is not the cause of a few individuals, nor a controversy confined to any one denomination of Christians. It affects the general interests of religion, and claims the attention of all who have any regard to these. The friends of

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of the Presbyterian interest, and of the reformed church in our native land, have a nearer concern with it. The members of the Secession-body are still more immediately interested. The attack has been directly made upon their constitution, the innovations which have been obtruded, affect the terms of their communion, their rights and privileges. They have made professions, and come under engagements respecting this cause, more explicit and solemn than others. It has, therefore, peculiar claims upon them. The Lord of all the churches is now addressing them, as he did the church of Thyatira of old: "Unto you I say, "and unto as many as have not known the depths of Satan, "as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden: "but that which ye have already, hold fast till I come," Rev. ii. 24, 25. But if they shall resign themselves to a torpid indifference and lukewarm neutrality; if, in contempt of all the sacred ties by which they are bound, they shall betray the cause, countenance and support errors formerly abjured, and tamely acquiesce in the establishment of a system erected upon the ruin of the former; if they shall "altogether hold their peace at this time," then let them know, that there shall "enlargement and deliverance arise "from another place." He who is "able of these stones "to raise up children to Abraham," and who has "the "hearts of all men in his hand," will not want persons for performing the necessary service.

As for us, we readily acknowledge our inability for the work in which we are engaged. In much weakness, and amidst many discouragements, we have hitherto been enabled to maintain the ground which we occupied, and it is but little that we can propose to do for its advancement. But of the cause we do not despair. It is the Lord's: he will maintain and advance it, in spite of all opposition. In whatever manner he may be pleased to dispose of us, he will revive IT in his own time, and by such instruments as he chooses to employ. He who gave "power unto his two witnesses to pro-"phesy clothed in sackcloth," during the reign of Antichrist,

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can still give power to his servants successfully to oppose that *Spiritual Antichrist*, which has now gone forth to deceive the nations. In the mean time, we desire to "wait "upon him in the way of his judgments," and, persuaded that he will "arise and have mercy upon Zion," to "take "pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." It has been the divine method in past times, to permit the interests of religion to sink very low in the church at large, or among a particular body, and to shut up all ordinary prospects of relief, for the trial of his servants, to "stain "the pride of all glory," and to secure the honour of their revival to himself. "We have heard with our ears, our "fathers have told us," the page of history records, what wonderful and unexpected interpositions he hath made in behalf of his work in Scotland; and his "hand is not "shortened, that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that "it cannot hear." *For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.—Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted: now will I lift up myself.—Arise, O God, plead thine own cause* *.

* Deut. xxxii. 36. Isa. xxxiii. 10. Psal. lxxiv. 22.

DEED

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DEED

BY WHICH THE PROTESTING MINISTERS CONSTITUTED THEMSELVES INTO A PRESBYTERY, WITH THE REASONS.

At Whitburn, the twenty-eighth day of August, One thousand, eight hundred and six years.

WHICH day and place, the following Ministers, viz. Messrs Archibald Bruce in Whitburn, James Aitken in Kirriemuir, James Hog in Kelso, and Thomas M'Crie in Edinburgh, protesters against certain late deeds of the General Associate Synod, being in providence convened together, and having spent part of this and the two preceding days in conference and prayer, took into particular and serious consideration the peculiar state into which the religious profession and Testimony, formerly maintained by the General Associate Synod, is now brought, in consequence of that Synod having adopted a New Testimony and declaration of principles, an altered Bond for public covenanting, and a New Formula of questions for all who shall hereafter be admitted to office among them;—by which deed, some important doctrines contained in the Confession of Faith, and different articles in their Testimony and principles formerly subscribed, are renounced and dropped, and opposite sectarian errors introduced; particularly, the duty and warrantableness of civil rulers employing their authority in an active support of the interests of religion and the kingdom of Christ, and in promoting reformation (which was an eminent part of the testimony and contendings of the church of Scotland, in behalf of the Reformation of our native land, civil and ecclesiastic, explicitly approved in the Secession), are by the new deeds denied and set aside; as also, that all covenants of a religious nature, entered into by nations in their public capacity,

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city, or in conjunction with churches, and in so far the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms, in their proper import, matter, and form, as well as in the manner of ratifying and enjoining them,—are either directly or by native consequence condemned: Against which new acts, the foresaid ministers had, on these and other grounds, given into the Synod repeated remonstrances and protestations, particularly against making an approbation of them a term of ministerial or Christian communion,—but without effect. Having considered, further, the situation in which they, and others who cannot approve of these deeds, now stand, with respect to communion with the Synod, in consequence of this refusal; particularly, having declared, in a paper which they gave in to the Synod in May last, that they found themselves virtually *secluded* both from Ministerial and Christian communion, while they could not with a good conscience, and consistently with the vows which they were previously under, comply with these new terms, nor concur with their brethren in carrying them into execution, or in administrations wherein an approbation of them is necessarily implied; and at the same time, having protested, in their own name, and in the name of all who should adhere to them, that, in this state of seclusion and separation to which they were reluctantly driven, it should be warrantable for them to maintain communion with such ministers and people as might still be disposed to adhere to their former profession, on the terms settled in the Associate Body from the beginning; and that they should have a right, as they might have a call, to exercise all the parts of their ministerial office, individually or in a judicative capacity, in support of their common profession, without any regard to these innovating acts; and that they should not be responsible to the Synod, or inferior judicatories, as presently constituted and acting according to these deeds, but would hold any censures as null and void that might be pronounced against them by these judicatories, for their conduct in this matter, while acting according to Presbyterian principles and

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their ordination-vows. The foresaid ministers having considered these things, and also, that they had waited for some time longer to see if there might be any prospect of a door being opened for their return to take their seats in Synod or presbyteries, in consistency with truth and duty; but finding, on the contrary, an increasing eagerness to propagate and impose their new principles with rigour, and a disposition to suppress ministerial freedom in testifying against these, and to enforce attendance upon judicatories,—they proceeded to deliberate on the question, Whether it is their duty, as matters stand, now to constitute themselves into a Presbytery, distinct and separate from the present Associate Judicatories with whom they have been hitherto connected? After every one had spoken his mind freely on this question, and reasons and difficulties on both sides had been weighed, and after one had been again employed in prayer for divine direction in this important step, it was, by a vote, unanimously agreed and resolved, *That as they had a right, and appeared to have a call, they should presently proceed to constitute,*—for the following among other reasons:

I. As they have already, upon the matter, found and declared, That the General Associate Synod, and inferior judicatories concurring with it (by departing from their ordination vows and covenant-engagements, adopting a different scheme of principles, imposing new and unwarrantable terms of communion, and persisting in their course of defection and mal-administration, notwithstanding all regular means used, in a state of communion, for reclaiming them), could no longer be acknowledged as faithful, or rightly constituted courts of Christ;—and that they could take no share with them in the exercise of government and discipline;—it is warrantable and needful for them to associate together, not only for the administration of the word and sacraments, and for occasional consultations, but also for the regular exercise of government and discipline (which is a part of the office and duty of all who are appointed pastors and overseers of Christ's flock), as Providence may give them an opportunity, for

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for mutual help and encouragement;—that neither they, nor their people cleaving to them, may be altogether destitute of the benefit of any of those institutions which the great Head of the Church hath appointed for the edifying of his body.

II. Their acting in this capacity appears to be no less needful for the support of the public cause for which they are contending; as otherwise the Reformation-testimony, in various articles of it—for the maintenance of which the Associate Judicatories were first constituted,—would be in great danger of being dropped and lost for the present in the Associate Body. Thus united, they may with greater effect plead the cause of opposed truth, and give an opportunity to its remaining friends, who may be disposed to adhere to their former profession and engagements, to appear and assert their violated rights and privileges. Thus also, through the Divine blessing, a body, however small, may be kept organized, and in adherence to the principles of the reformed church of Scotland, in a time of general defection, and when sectarian tenets are so rapidly increasing; and the original constitution of the Associate Judicatories may, as far as lies in their power, be asserted, maintained, or restored.

III. Though there are some other bodies of Presbyterians in this land who profess adherence to the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and other subordinate standards, and who may be in the main hearty friends to the Reformation-testimony, and to those articles which are now in a special manner attacked; yet, as there are none with whom, according to the known state of their public profession, they have freedom presently to form a junction, they reckon themselves shut up to the necessity of meeting apart; waiting for the time of healing, if haply some bars and offences subsisting among the remaining friends of evangelical truth and the Reformation-interest may be removed; for which desirable object their prayers and endeavours shall not be wanting. In the mean time, where two or three are met together in the name of Christ, they may claim the promise, "There am I in the midst of them."—Nor can this

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their deed of constitution prove a hindrance in the way of returning to a cordial union with their former connections, when obstructions shall be removed; or of following the things that make for peace with any friends of the Redeemer's cause, consistently with edification.

IV. They consider their ordination-vows as laying them under obligations to the step which they are now taking. By these they acknowledged Presbyterian church-government and discipline to be of Divine institution, and promised "never to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion thereof, but that they would, to the utmost of their power, in their station, during all the days of their life, maintain, support, and defend the same, against every other form of government;" which they could not be said to do, if they were to continue in a practical neglect of it; especially in a time when Independency, in various shapes, so greatly prevails in this land. They also solemnly promised,—"to the utmost of their power to assert, maintain, and defend, the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, against all doctrines, tenets, and opinions whatsoever, contrary to or inconsistent with the same;" as likewise, to maintain the Judicial Testimony, emitted by the Associate Presbytery, with the Declaration of their principles on the head of civil government;—which they could not be said to have done, to the extent here promised, if, after endeavouring to assert and maintain them in the way of contending with the judicatories in a state of connection with them, they should not continue to do so jointly and in a judicative capacity, when Providence puts it in their power thus to act. Their engagement to be subject to the admonitions of brethren in presbytery, as constituted for maintaining the Reformation-cause, and to preserve the spiritual unity and peace of, and to follow no divisive course from, the Reformed and Covenanted Church of Scotland,—implies the same thing; as this, in the present state of matters, seems to be the only practicable and warrantable way in which they can discharge this part of their engagements, from which they cannot be released, "whatever trouble or persecution

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secution they may meet with in essaying the faithful discharge of their duty herein."

V. *Lastly*, In maintaining the public Testimony for the interest of Christ, and a dispensation of all his ordinances in conformity to this, a regard must be had to the time to come. According to the charge given to Israel of old, when "he "established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in "Israel, which he commanded our fathers; that they should "make them known to their children: that the genera-"tion to come might know them, even the children which "should be born, who should arise and declare them to their "children," Psal. lxxviii. 5, 6. As those who are now engaged in contending for truth may soon finish their course, it is incumbent on them to consider to whom the same trust may be committed, and how provision is to be made for those who are, or may be destitute of the dispensation of public ordinances, agreeable to the Testimony which they have espoused, and to which they can submit with a good conscience. Although they have not hitherto intended, nor have yet resolved to send supply of sermon to those who, in different places, have signified their resolution to adhere to their profession; yet, if they should find themselves called to this, and if the Lord see meet to prosper their present attempt, and excite young men, of a faithful and zealous spirit, to offer themselves willingly for the public service of Christ and his scattered flock, they may, by the step which they are now taking, be in a situation to carry into execution the apostolic charge, "The things that thou hast heard "of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," 2 Tim. ii. 2. They would think that they had failed in their duty, if they declined a measure conducive to the gaining of this important end.

Whereupon, the Rev. Mr BRUCE, being unanimously chosen for this purpose, did, as their mouth, by solemn prayer, constitute the Presbytery in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the alone King and Head of his church.

Appointed next meeting of Presbytery to be in Edinburgh, on Tuesday the 11th of November ensuing.—Closed with prayer.

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EDINBURGH, Nov. 11. 1806.

THE Associate Presbytery met, and was constituted with prayer by the REV. ARCHIBALD BRUCE, Moderator, Sederunt with him Messrs JAMES AITKEN, JAMES HOG, and THOMAS M'CRIE, Ministers.

The Minute of the Deed of Constitution was read, corrected, and ordered to be recorded. The Presbytery agreed that the following DECLARATION should be added, as a Supplement to that minute, expressing more fully their sentiments respecting some things contained in it. Accordingly they declare,

I. That, as it has been the principal ground of complaint against the General Synod, that they have relinquished the subordinate standards of the reformed church of Scotland, the Testimony and other public papers, containing the declared principles of the Associate Body, as formerly received by them, which appears from the preamble of the foregoing deed, and more fully from the papers of remonstrance and protestation given in to the Synod in the course of their procedure in this cause, (some of which may hereafter be published), in all of which the brethren declared their satisfaction with the principles contained in these standards and public papers, and with the terms and constitution of the Associate Judicatories therein declared;—so the Presbytery think scarcely any thing more necessary, to satisfy all as to the ground on which they stand, than to renew their adherence to the system already adopted, with regard to doctrine, worship, church-government, and discipline; professing that they continue on the same ground as formerly, and that they have no new principles to declare.

II. That their continued attachment to the Confession of Faith, and other standards of the church of Scotland, arises not from an undue veneration for any particular form of words, or the authority of those who compiled and have adopted them, but from a conviction of the excellence of the doctrines contained in them, and their being well adapt-

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ed for the purpose for which they were designed; particularly from the consideration of their having been received and ratified as a part of the uniformity engaged to by solemn covenant between the three kingdoms, which purpose no new compilations by an Associate Judicatory, whatever excellent truths they might contain, can equally answer.

III. That their resolution to abide by the former Judicial Testimony, instead of adopting the new one framed by the Synod, does not proceed from any opposition to the design of an explicit application of what is contained in the former to more recent occurrences, and the progress of public evils, or to necessary additions unto it, which have been made, or might have been made; but from its containing a more distinct, explicit, full, and faithful statement of the Reformation-principles and attainments of the church of Scotland and of the Secession, than is to be found in the new Narrative and Testimony; from its being yet in some measure a remaining bond of union between different bodies of Seceders, in as far as they profess to adopt, and still continue to adhere to it; more especially, on account of the inconsistency, in several things apparent, between the new testimony and the former one, with other public deeds of the Secession. Their resolution is confirmed by the consideration, that these, as well as the Confession and other standards, had been already adopted, and that adherence to them had become the matter of solemn promise and vows in the Associate Body, from which they are not at freedom to recede at the pleasure of men.

IV. That they think the composing of new formularies of public authority, to supersede the use of those already received, neither needful nor seasonable; but they see an urgent call to declare more explicitly their adherence to those doctrines, or articles of testimony contained in them, which are particularly attacked, dropped, rendered dubious, obscured or misrepresented in the new books and other writings of the time, and to endeavour their maintenance and vindication against the specious scheme of opposite errors,

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errors, to which duty, according to their ability and opportunity, they shall reckon themselves in a special manner bound to attend.

V. That although some may affect still to be ignorant of their views and principles, (notwithstanding the repeated and open declaration which they have made respecting them, in conformity to what is stated above); and although, in a time when unusual liberty is taken to misrepresent and falsify, some may talk at random of new and strange principles being adopted on their side; and insinuations of this kind have been made by members and committees of Synod to serve their own purpose;—yet they desire to sit easy under this, and other calumnies liberally thrown upon them; as they are confident that a serious charge of this kind cannot be supported; and as it was never made by the Courts, although they were required to do so (if they had any such charge); the citations served upon them, and the censures inflicted, being founded solely upon the steps which they found themselves obliged to take, in opposition to the innovations introduced, particularly upon the paper given in by them in May last *, and their acting agreeably to it.

VI. That though the brethren had not formed the resolution of acting separately from the Synod, (of which they gave abundant evidence by their continuing for a course of years to hold all the communion with them which they could do, consistently with their opposition to the acts protested against,) yet they found this unavoidable, and sufficiently justified by the reasons already given, after the Synod had settled their deeds as terms of communion, without any hope of reversal; and additional grounds have been given for this by the violent measures which have been pursued during the course of this year, in attempting to suppress due ministerial freedom, and violating justice, constitutional principles, and Presbyterian order, in the processes managed by the Associate Judicatories, and the censures which

* The substance of this paper is subjoined to this Declaration.

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which they have pretended to inflict upon the protesting ministers, merely for adherence to their profession, and taking measures to support it after it was relinquished by the Synod; against which censures they had previously protested, and continue to protest, as null and void, and such as, with respect to grounds, manner, and some circumstances accompanying them, will be found unequalled in the Presbyterian church, as a detail of facts, (were it proper here to give it) would, they doubt not, make evident to the impartial world. By their conduct in this matter, the guilt of the judicatories has been highly aggravated; they have crowned their defection by persecuting those who opposed it, and have aimed a deadly stroke not only against the character and usefulness of a few ministers, but against the public cause for which they were contending.

VII. That they are fully convinced, as this is not the personal cause of any of the ministers, but a public cause, in which all Associate congregations, and the principles and privileges of every church-member, are especially concerned, that it was the duty of sessions, and of the people at large, to have appeared more early, in expressing their disapprobation of the intended innovations, when communicated to them as overtures or finished deeds; and that it was their right, as well as their duty, when these were settled as the terms of communion, to have stood up as one man in declaring their adherence to their profession, and in keeping themselves free from the imposed yoke, from which they cannot now so easily be released. But, though they have lost the most proper opportunity, it is still competent for them, or any number of them, to disclaim the obtruded innovations, and to support the former profession of the body, according to the manifold obligations under which they lie, and from which no authority on earth can absolve them.

VIII. That, from the representations and petitions laid before the Presbytery at their present meeting, from various places, they are affected to learn the perplexed and distressed

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situation in which numbers are now placed, with whom they cordially sympathize.—To such as have already seen it their duty to make a formal separation, they regret that they cannot at present afford the supplies for the dispensation of public ordinances which they crave: Preachers and students of divinity being swept away by the prevailing tide, and the constituent members of this Presbytery being fixed to particular charges, within which, while a competent number of their people continue to adhere to their first profession, they are bound chiefly to appropriate their labours. Even though they were able, and at liberty to itinerate, they could afford but very incompetent provision. If occasional visitations and services be given to some of them, it is all that can reasonably be expected in present circumstances. What can they say more to them, than that they should wait on the Lord, study to edify one another, and pray the Lord of the harvest to thrust out labourers into his vineyard? In the mean time, it is recommended to members of Presbytery, to converse with such persons as they may have access to know, who have been engaged in studies with a view to the ministry, to learn their mind as to submitting to be employed in public work.

As there are others of the people who have not yet seen meet to take such a decided step, restrained chiefly by the apprehension of their being for a time deprived of public ordinances, the Presbytery, without condemning those who, in such circumstances, have had freedom to attend upon the dispensation of the gospel, are free to intimate their judgment, that, as communion is now stated upon sinful terms, a silent compliance, even in so far, can hardly consist with their duty of testifying against, and keeping themselves free of a share in the public evils. Such steps as will discover their disapprobation of the new constitution, and of their purpose regularly to countenance, when they can attain them, administrations upon the former principles, and in maintenance of the original constitution of the Associate Judicatories, seem indispensably incumbent, in the present state

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state of things, upon all who would shew themselves faithful to their profession.

IX. That, as inconveniencies often arise from the circumstance of the same name being applied to different religious bodies, and as there are already Associate Presbyteries in different connections, to avoid confusion, and distinguish them from others, they think it not improper to join the term *Constitutional* with that of *Associate;* as this also may serve to express their adherence to the true Constitution of the Reformed Church of Scotland, as stated in her standards and reformation-acts, and to the original Constitution of the Associate Presbytery and Synod.

This, and the preceding Minute, are extracted by

THO. M'CRIE, Cl. Pres.

Substance of the Paper given in by the Protesting Ministers to the General Associate Synod, May 1806; *with some particulars, relative to their previous contendings against the New Deeds.*

IN October 1801, when the Synod proceeded to enact a part of the overture, which had been under their consideration for a number of years, as a Testimony, intended to supersede their former Judicial Testimony, several of those ministers, who had previously been using regular means for preventing matters from coming to that issue, found themselves obliged to dissent from, or protest against that deed. However, as the cause was still in some measure dependent, they contented themselves, both at this time and afterwards upon the enacting of the Narrative, with recording their dissent or protestation, and stating to the Synod, the reasons of their opposition, claiming the reversal of these deeds, or the alteration of them, in such a manner as to render them consistent with the former profession and subscriptions of the body. After an ineffectual attempt to obviate the objections to the late deeds, by the enacting of some explanatory propositions, the Synod found it necessary to alter their Narrative and Testimony, and enacted them anew, with these alterations, in May 1804; making them at the same time the term of communion for the body. Al-

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though, by these alterations, some of the more glaring expressions objected to were removed, yet the doctrines themselves remained in the deeds as before, besides the addition of some things equally exceptionable, with several gross inconsistencies, and ambiguities; so that the difficulties of the brethren continued, and were increased.

In May 1805, the Synod heard and approved of answers prepared by a Committee to reasons of remonstrance, which the protesting brethren had given in at the former meeting, against the Narrative and Testimony, with the explanatory propositions. These answers were of a similar strain with others read at a following meeting, of which some account shall presently be given. Next day, the Synod proceeded to seal their late deeds by a solemn oath. After serious deliberation upon the state which matters now assumed, four of the Protesters gave in a paper to the Synod, in which they signified that they were at a great loss to know whether any, or what degree of communion could now be maintained between the Synod and them, in consequence of the new terms, but as the question was of great moment, they wished to do nothing rashly; and, in the mean time, renewed their adherence to their former protestations, claiming a right to act in full conformity unto them. This protestation was with difficulty admitted into the minutes; and only in the way of the Synod coming to a formal resolution, by which they directly imposed *sinful terms* upon the Protesters, and unwarrantably restricted their *ministerial liberty*.* They would now have been warranted in declaring themselves

* The following is the important document referred to above:

'EDINBURGH, 7th May 1805.

'That the Synod having already answered the remonstrance and protest formerly given in by these Brethren, they consider no particular answer necessary 'to the present protest, as they judge that the force of their reasoning is already 'taken off by these answers; yet the Synod agree, for the satisfaction and exonera-'tion of the Brethren protesting, to ingross their protest in their minutes, in the 'way of signifying their disapprobation of various expressions in their protest; 'particularly in representing the manner of covenanting by the Synod as op-'posite and contradictory unto former covenanting in the Secession, which the 'Synod cannot admit. At the same time, the Synod signify, that although 'these Brethren cannot for the time see it to be their duty actively to concur 'in covenanting, agreeably to the Acknowledgement of sins and bond adopted 'by the Synod, or to concur in licensing Preachers, or ordaining Ministers, ac-'cording to the present Formula: *yet the Synod cannot admit procedure in covenanting, but on the footing of the Acknowledgment of sins and bond adopted by them, or allow any other Formula to be used, but that agreed upon by the Synod.* And the 'Synod expect, that in the event of their Brethren's protestation being admit-'ted into the records of Court, *they will not, either from the pulpit or from the press, impugn or oppose our principles, as stated by the Synod.* And as the Synod 'have not prohibited our Brethren from receiving into communion persons 'who may better understand, or approve of, the former statement of our princi-'ples, so, on the other hand, the Synod expect, that our Brethren shall not re-'fuse to admit to communion such persons as have read and approve of our 'principles,

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selves excluded from communion by the Synod. by the imposition of these terms, and in taking steps accordingly; but, as they were still reluctant to take this last measure, and as another attempt was to be made by a brother who had been absent from the former meeting, they determined to wait the issue of this, and satisfied themselves with giving in a note to the Synod, in which they declared, in temperate but decided language, that they disclaimed the holding or exercising of their ministry upon such limitations and conditions.

Mr Archibald Bruce of Whitburn, who had entered dissents and protestations in former stages of procedure (particularly against an Act concerning the Magistrate's power in matters of religion; an Act authorising the license and ordination of office-bearers without joining in the usual bond; and an Act for a new acknowledgment of sins and bond), gave in, at this meeting, reasons of remonstrance and protest against the New Testimony, referring, for more full illustration on different heads, to reasons given in by him against the above acts, some of which had never been considered by the Synod; and offering to produce proof, if it should be demanded, of a number of mis-statements in the Narrative. To this remonstrance the following requisition was subjoined, under form of protest:

'principles, as the Synod have now stated them. And in fine, that our Brethren 'conduct themselves, as they have done hitherto, *in attending church-courts, and* 'assisting their Brethren on sacramental occasions, that the edification of the body 'may not be marred, but the peace and unity of the church promoted.'

In any use which has been made of this minute by the Synod or their friends, the principal parts have always been suppressed; and the only thing which has been brought forward is the allowance given to the protesting ministers to receive into communion upon the Old Testimony, such persons as may 'better un-'derstand, or approve' of it. This has been magnified as a great favour to them, and a mighty instance of the Synod's forbearance, with such as preferred the former Testimony. But, those who give the least attention may at once see, that, whatever indulgence this might be to some candidates for communion, it could be none to these ministers, while they were bound to admit all who applied according to the New Testimony, If they had freedom to make use of the New Testimony in admitting *one* person to communion, they would have had freedom to admit *ten thousand* in the same way, even all who applied to them. It was therefore a piece of mockery to them to hold out this under the idea of an indulgence. While this minute is unmeaning in this article, it is tyrannical in another: 'The Synod cannot admit procedure in covenanting, but on 'the footing of the Acknowledgment of sins and bond adopted by them, or al-'low any other Formula to be used but that agreed upon by the Synod,' i. e. the Synod discharge the protesting ministers, or any others, from using that Bond which they themselves had sworn, or that Formula upon which they had been ordained. Thus, they were either precluded from ordaining elders, and setting about covenanting in their congregations, or they were obliged to use a Formula and Bond inconsistent with those which they had sworn; that is, the Synod shut them up either to live in the neglect of duty, or to commit what they judged sinful! Further, although these ministers declared, in the paper engrossed in the minutes of Synod, that the covenanting now practised by the Synod was *opposite* and *contradictory* unto former covenanting in the

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protest: 'That in order to preserve the bond of wonted fellowship 'inviolate, these new terms of communion imposed upon ministers 'and people by the recent deeds, should be speedily reversed, that 'the other points of difference might yet be taken into serious re- 'view, and grievances complained of in due time redressed; and 'that, while these acts continued in force, the Remonstrant, and 'others who could not assent to the new terms, must consider 'themselves as virtually secluded from communion, to which ne- 'cessity imposed on them, they must reluctantly give way; pro- 'testing, in the mean time, that they shall hold themselves free 'from the operation of these acts; and that, as they had a right, 'so they would reckon themselves at liberty, as they might have 'a call, to discharge any office or duty, individually or jointly, 'according to Presbyterian principles, in maintenance of the com- 'mon cause, and that in so doing they would hold the exercise of 'any authority to hinder them, that might be assumed by the Ge- 'neral Synod, or inferior judicatories, as unwarrantable and un- 'constitutional, while subordination, as expressed and limited in 'ordination-vows, was not, and would not be denied; disclaiming, 'at the same time, every intention of promoting schism, or in- 'creasing the lamentable divisions of the times; expressing also a 'readiness to hold communion as heretofore, with any ministers or 'people, notwithstanding of some different sentiments about parti- 'cular points of the complex controversy, or although they might 'not

the Secession, yet the Synod require them to 'attend church-courts, and as- 'sist their brethren on sacramental occasions;' that is, they were to cultivate the closest communion with persons who had sworn an oath which they look- ed upon as opposite, and contradictory to that formerly used in the Secession.

Nor is this all the imposition; for it is expected also, that 'they will not, 'either from *the pulpit* or *the press*, *impugn* or *oppose*, our principles, *as stated* 'by the Synod.' There could not be a more glaring violation of ministerial freedom, and the liberty of the press (as far as it was in the Synod's power to restrain it), than this. Had these ministers submitted to such restrictions, they would have been unworthy of entering a pulpit, or making any appear- ance from the press. We cannot conceive a more pitiable object, than that of a man, under the character of a minister of Christ, who ascends a pulpit, with his conscience labouring under a sense of public evils, and prevailing defections, but who *dare not* oppose them. As the Deeds complained of and opposed were not transient acts, but deeply affected the constitution, were turned into fixed terms of communion, and published to the world, it was absurd to suppose that the Protesters could confine their opposition to mere judicial contendings, or that they could have exonered their consciences by protestations buried in minutes of Court, or by papers, which were either never to be read, or, after being cursorily read, to be consigned to the cus- tody of the clerks, *in perpetuam rei oblivionem*.—Upon the whole, a declaration so replete with *tyranny* and *inconsistency*, can scarcely be produced; and it would be difficult to say, whether the conduct of the Synod, in proposing such terms of communion, or that of the protesters, if they had accepted of them, would have been most unjustifiable. Some further observations upon the terms of communion may be expected in the review of the Censures.

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'not have clearness as to the particular steps, or the proper mode 'of procedure in present circumstances.'

This requisition and protest were admitted into the minutes of Synod, and referred to a committee. One of the former remonstrants (Mr Aitken of Kirriemuir), expressed his adherence to the above requisition and protest when read; as did also two of the surviving protesters, (Mess. Hogg of Kelso, and M'Crie of Edinburgh), when the cause was again entered upon in May 1806. These brethren, while they paid all due attention to the answers given in both last year and this, so they anxiously waited the Synod's final resolution upon the above demand; which they expressed in a general vote, sanctioning the committee's replies, which amounted to a determined refusal; while no expedient was proposed that could possibly meet the convictions of the Protesters, or afford any ground upon which a consistent scriptural communion could in such circumstances be maintained. Things having been brought to this crisis by the foresaid vote, the four brethren, who had concurred in the requisition and last form of protestation, before the Synod rose, jointly presented a paper subscribed by them, which, though a copy of it cannot at present be obtained, was of the following import: *

The Subscribers, who have formerly given in remonstrances and protestations have carefully attended to the answers given, and to the explications and defences of the doctrines and other matters to which objections had been made, but notwithstanding their eager desire to have occasions of controversy so grievous to them removed, they are sorry to say, that the answers and explications given on the main heads are in their view altogether unsatisfactory; that, on the contrary, they tend rather to confirm the charge brought against the Synod of having adopted sentiments inconsistent with their former profession, and that they have undertaken the defence of a scheme subversive of Presbyterian principles, and a testimony in behalf of the Reformation in Scotland, the United Kingdoms, and in other nations. To say nothing of the abuse and calumnious insinuations of a personal nature, occasionally thrown out; which in such a cause, they can not only bear, but take joyfully: they have with pain observed, throughout the answers and speeches, in this and in former meetings, a gross misapprehension and misstating of the question on the principal articles, with a disposition to

* Owing to the hurry with which they were obliged to give in this paper, during the time the Synod were sitting, the brethren had not an opportunity of previously taking an exact copy of it. They applied at the time for liberty to take a copy, which was *refused*. Application has since been made to the Synod and their clerks for extracts of this, and other papers, necessary for their defence, which has also been *refused!* The above is as near to what was given in to the Synod as it could be made from a previous draught, and is more full and exact than the abridgement which was published in the Christian Magazine.

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to put the most unfair constructions upon, and to draw the most unjust inferences from, the sentiments of the Remonstrants, and the common doctrines (as well as the proceedings) of this and other reformed churches, which, on these points, the brethren consider as one and the same; which doctrines were also considered as the Synod's own received and subscribed principles until of late. In consequence of this, a great deal of time and labour have been unnecessarily employed in refuting, or exposing to odium, tenets and extremes of their own devising; such at least as all sound presbyterians have ever rejected and abhorred, and which the Remonstrants have ever done, and hope ever to do.

The Remonstrants are agreed in expressing satisfaction with a system which clearly defines and establishes the due distinction between civil and religious societies, the independence, proper province, rights and duties pertaining to both; which disclaims equally a Popish and Erastian supremacy over the church and her liberties, or any lordship or legislative human authority over the faith and consciences of men; which has explicitly avowed the right of a private judgment competent to every man in all moral and religious concerns, but so as not to be incompatible with the right of those who are in authority, civil or ecclesiastic to judge and act in subordination to divine laws, natural or revealed; which has asserted mens right to the enjoyment of all kinds of liberty, in civil and religious society, subject to no other restraints than those which the law of God imposes, or which the due exercise and support of authority, the preservation of order, and the promoting of the public good require; which has never taught that the Christian faith should be forcibly imposed, or that true religion can ever be produced or promoted by violence; a system which has all along been befriended, and has long ago been reduced to its genuine principles and settled form, in the reformed church of this land, by the well known and approved friends of religion and liberty, and the most strenuous opposers of tyranny, papal, regal, or democratical.

For their part, they consider persecution for conscience' sake, as one of the most odious and intolerable species of oppression; and are persuaded that in nothing did the spirit of Satan ever more eminently appear, than in the system of compulsion adopted by the Antichristian powers, and in the laws, bloody leagues, wars, and massacres promoted by Rome for the extirpation of what was called heresy, and which were but too exactly imitated and copied in many of the statutes and barbarous measures adopted against non-conformists in Britain since the Reformation, in the periods when prelatical and state-despotism in conjunction prevailed. But when the world, or any particular kingdom, was subjected to such a tyranny, and when all who undertook or favoured reformation, were exposed to such violence, they think it strange that any should

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should question the warrantableness and necessity of the joint efforts of men in all ranks and stations, and of employing all the influence and means competent to them, and consequently of a cooperation of the temporal and spiritual power when it could be obtained, in order to introduce at first, or secure afterwards, a public reformation; or that any should doubt whether, in such a state of things, the forming of associations, strengthened by solemn covenants and oaths, (not of a mere civil but of a religious or mixed nature, into which men in their different capacities, and not merely as church-members, might enter and act in concert, either with or without the additional sanction of public legal authority), were not most needful, reasonable, and often happy means of safety and of reformation, amidst violent enemies, or plotting and factious opposers, domestic or foreign: or that any should deny that the ordinary exercise of civil authority in all states, even in more quiet times may not be necessary and conducive to promote morality and religion, and for settling, together with the secular affairs of commonwealths, the external peace, order, and security of the church of Christ, in the full and permanent enjoyment of its own peculiar liberties, government, and institutions.

In these views they see reason to continue their approbation of the doctrines of the Confession of Faith on these heads, accompanied with the explications and qualifications that had been formerly given and adopted in the Secession; of the National Covenants and Solemn League of the three kingdoms in behalf of the Protestant interest; and also of all the reformation that had formerly been attained to, both in the ecclesiastical and civil departments; and to the particular acts and deeds of settlement specified, and as limited in the former Testimony, and in the declaration of principles on the head of civil government. To the doctrine of the latter, in particular, as to the origin of the magistratical power in natural principles, and the proper exercise of it, as cut out by and lying within the compass of these principles, the Protesters have never given the smallest reason to suppose that they did not cordially assent, as the Committee have unaccountably insinuated. But this is not inconsistent with its being subjected to the Mediator's power, as all things are, and the subserviency of it to the interests of HIS kingdom in the world, to whom all kings and nations are injoined to pay homage.

But it appears now too evident, not only from the known sentiments and private writings of some members, but from the late public deeds and votes of the Synod, that they have adopted a different scheme, and have given countenance to what have been usually accounted Anabaptistical, Sectarian, or Independent tenets, on these heads, and that had been formerly renounced and solemnly abjured by them: and that they have in so far befriended the prin-

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ciples and designs of some modern infidels and politicians which tend to make a total separation of civil government and religion, as if the interests of the latter in no shape pertained to the former, farther than to grant and secure equal liberty and privileges to all religious systems, while the peace and secular interests of society are not directly injured; that hereby they have unduly restricted the exercise and interfered with the rights of civil government, have represented all active countenance and support to any particular religion, or any sanction to church-deeds by human laws, as an Erastian encroachment, a confounding of the temporal and spiritual jurisdiction, and as necessarily involving persecution for conscience' sake; while the rights of conscience have been so explained as to favour anarchy and licentiousness, in all matters pertaining to religion, in defiance of all restraint by human authority, of any kind.

The question is now no longer, under what limitations, or in what manner may magistrates exercise their power *circa sacra?* but, whether there be any power whatever of this kind competent to them? not, whether penal sanctions in certain cases may be improper or too severe; not whether some particular acts or measures in behalf of religion and religious covenants, in the times of reformation in Britain, may have been inexpedient (though this is always insinuated or conceded to the adversaries without enquiry and without proof), but whether the application of such power to religious or ecclesiastical objects be not itself an Antichristian abuse, inconsistent with the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. The authority itself in whatever degree, or however applied, is at last by the Synod declared to be a non-entity. In consequence, a national religion, national covenants, and national churches, in the usual and proper acceptation of the words, are exploded as an absurdity: all tests which tend to make religious distinctions, or which may be used as qualifications for offices of power and trust, supreme or subordinate, are virtually condemned; and all constitutions and laws that imply the exercise of such a power, in every Protestant and Christian nation, ought wholly to be abolished. The precepts, examples, predictions, and promises in the Old Testament scriptures, which have hitherto been adduced as warrants for such things, are held to be inapplicable, and in this view inconsistent with the nature of the New Testament dispensation: by which countenance has been given to the error, which represents the church of God under the Old Testament to have been essentially different from that under the New.

A new doctrine on the head of public vows, oaths, and covenants, whereby they are restricted to Church-members only, and mere religious duties, has also been adopted and defended; by the application of which to the former transactions in this and other reforming states (in which Covenants of a different description

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tion were used) the Protestant reformation is exposed to unjust censure; and particularly the public covenants, and solemn league of these kingdoms, together with the national reformation and uniformity, the great object of them, must be accounted unjustifiable in their form, matter, and ends, as well as in regard of the authority enjoining, and the sanctions annexed; the national capacity, in which these were taken or abjured, is no longer admitted in asserting their obligation, or the guilt of their violation, as to the religious part; and to judge of them complexly, or otherwise than as Church-covenants, the Synod declare to be incompetent to them. A revival of such a covenanted reformation is no longer to be desired nor endeavoured; and accordingly, a new acknowledgment of sins, excluding several evils formerly testified against and confessed, has been adopted by the Synod; together with a new Bond, in which by the alterations made, and by the reference to the new Testimony, the swearer engages to a very different profession and reformation from that which was formerly adopted in the Reformed Church of Scotland and the Secession *.

This scheme of principles being evidently opposite to those formerly professed by the Associate body, all the books to which assent had formerly been required, have been so glossed, depraved, or altered, as to make them better to accord with the new opinions, and are henceforth to be subjected to the test of the new Testimony and Narrative, into which these opinions have been either more explicitly or covertly introduced, and in which other mistakes, in the statement of facts, or in sentiment, with several inconsistencies, may also be found. And an express approbation of the books, as thus altered, is made an indispensible condition of admission into any office by the new Formula, and an approbation of, or acquiescence in all the contents of the new Testimony, is declared henceforth to be a term of Christian communion in the body.

Induced by these and other considerations, more generally or particularly expressed in different papers of dissent or remonstrance presented to the Synod, in the progress of this business for years past, the protesting Brethren demanded the repeal of these deeds, and new terms of communion; to which request, the Synod having now given a decided negative, vindicating the obnoxious tenets and offensive measures, they find themselves reduced to the hard alternative, either of approving and concurring in the execution of deeds contrary to their judgment and former engagements, or of disobeying the authority enacting, of abandoning important articles in their religious profession, even after an oath interposed about

* The inconsistencies between the former Acknowledgment of Sins and Bond, and the new one adopted by the Synod, may be afterwards more fully exposed, by the publication of Reasons of Protest against the latter, given in to the Synod.

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bout them, (which they cannot be at liberty to do), or to submit to be deprived of the desirable fellowship of their brethren, while stated on these new grounds. In such a case, however, there is none but may see which of the two they must of necessity chuse.

Had the cause been of a personal or private nature, or had the matters of complaint been only some transient and temporary acts in the exercise of church government and discipline, they might have seen cause to have rested, although still dissatisfied, in what they had done in court for their own exoneration; but when it is of a public nature, affects the whole body, and the general interests of religion; and viewing, as they do, these deeds as affecting and changing the constitution, and as entering into the acts of public administration, and the communion of the religious society, as calculated to produce extensive and permanent effects, erroneous tenets being inserted in standard-books, to be publicly taught, widely disseminated, and perpetuated,—they reckon themselves bound to use every lawful mode of opposition to these innovations which is in their power.

Wherefore, finding no longer access to continue judicial contendings in Synod, nor any hopes left of their being allowed to retain their former profession entire, or of enjoying ministerial freedom in co-operation with the General Synod, and inferior judicatories, as now constituted according to the terms enacted, and the restrictions attempted to be imposed on protesting ministers last year. they are constrained (though without any prospect of being able to maintain a successful opposition, in the present state of things, to the torrent that is carrying along the large body of Seceders throughout the land), once more to declare and protest in their own name, and in the name of all who may still be disposed to adhere to their former profession and engagements, that they shall hold themselves free from any obligation to comply with these innovating acts; that they shall account every attempt by the Synod, or any in subjection to it, to compel them to conformity to the new system and constitution, to be unwarrantable; and that, in the present state of exclusion into which they have been driven by the prevailing party in Synod (which, they wish, may be but temporary and short), they shall be at liberty to maintain their former testimony, and communion as formerly stated, with ministers and people, as Providence may give them opportunity; and that, in endeavouring to do this, they must consider themselves as possessing a full right to the exercise of ministetial or judicative powers, according as they may have a call, or may think it conducive to the ends of edification to use that right, and that, notwithstanding of any censure or sentence the Synod may see meet to pass to the contrary, on account of the part they have been obliged to act in this cause.

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At the same time, they disclaim, as before, all idea of following any devisive course from the reformed and covenanted Church of Scotland, the original Secession Testimony, or judicatories maintaining it, while they reckon their present non-concurrence with the Synod necessary to avoid the guilt of such a schismatical and sectarian course. So far from wishing to promote what can justly be termed schism, or to multiply parties, they consider it as one principal part of public duty, to endeavour to advance a nearer conjunction and uniformity in religion among divided churches and kingdoms, according to the word of God and former engagements; and they shall ever be ready, on their part, to countenance any intercourse or attempts which may have a tendency to remove subsisting differences between their brethren and them, or evangelical ministers and Christians of other denominations, who are still willing to admit the Westminster standards as the basis of ecclesiastical uniformity and union.

POSTSCRIPT.

THERE has lately appeared a Publication on the present controversy, of a very strange kind, professing to be 'the substance 'of two remonstrances presented to the General Associate Synod 'in the years 1804 and 1805, and of the answers to them, prepared 'by a committee, at the desire of Synod, collected and arranged 'with some enlargements, by a Member of the Committee.' Although, from the specimens which we received in the answers as read in Synod, we did not expect much candour or justice in the management of the cause; yet we scarcely supposed that such flagrant violations of these would be committed at the bar of the public, or that a publication, stuffed with such injurious misrepresentations and abuse, and in which charity, and even common decorum are so often set at defiance, would be ventured. But it seems the instrument employed, and his advisers, judged that the circumstances required such an attempt, and that those 'for whom 'the work is chiefly intended' were prepared for its reception. We do not propose here to enter into an examination of this publication, but shall merely make a few general remarks upon it.

When persons, in managing a public controversy, descend to personal abuse, when they endeavour to prepossess the public mind, and to hold up the characters or conduct of their opponents to popular odium and prejudice; this has always, by candid and judicious persons, been reckoned a strong presumption of a bad cause. And when a writer begins his work with collecting and arranging the materials for such an attack, it is sufficient to throw a suspicion

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a suspicion over the whole. Those must have a keen appetite for entertainment of this kind, who can be gratified with the fare which is served up to them in the publication of which we speak. It is a very striking circumstance, in the present controversy, that, although the friends of the new principles have the weight of ecclesiastical authority, numbers, and the tide of popular opinion on their side, yet they have, in the most unprecedented manner, had recourse to personalities, and by catching at the most trifling incidents, and circulating the silliest reports, by whisperings and surmises, endeavoured to blast among the people the credit of the ministers who have opposed the late measures of the Synod.

The method adopted in that publication is deceitful and unfair. The reader must at once perceive that he has not the sentiments of the protesters fully before him. He has only such extracts as their opponents chose to favour him with; such objections only are brought forward as they thought they could declaim upon most fluently; while the rest are kept back and suppressed. In all the instances which we recollect of answers to reasons of protest or dissent, the reasons were fully published, by order of the court, as well as the answers; unless the parties had previously given them to the world. But in the present case, one of the parties takes upon him to 'select and arrange' from *unpublished* papers, what he pleases to call 'the most material points of this 'controversy,' and to omit 'various things contained in these rea-'sons,' under the notion that they 'have no relation to the sub-'ject in debate;' and, after having thus gutted and garbled, divided and dressed them in such a manner as suited his own purposes and arrangement, pretends that he has done justice to his opponents, because 'the very words of the remonstrance have been fairly tran-'scribed,' as far as extracts have been made! The length of the papers could be no valid objection to their entire publication. The remonstrances were not longer than the subject required, and in both of them large illustrations and proofs were purposely avoided, the remonstrants having formerly given in papers on the same subject, unto which they referred, and offering to substantiate other charges, if required; although the respondent preserves deep silence as to these, while he, at the same time, preposterously complains of the want of proof. Besides, he has found room for extracts from, and animadversions upon a sermon, and has spent a number of pages in refuting arguments which he says have never 'been urged' or 'made use of by the brethren in their papers of 'remonstrance,' (p. 69). But then such a mode of answering, it was judged, would be 'of use to *the people*, for whom the publi-'cation is chiefly intended!' *Ruat cælum, ruat justitia; credant populi.* Provided only we can get *the people* persuaded!

Next to the proposal of the sentiments of opponents, the fair statement of the question is of essential importance in managing a controversy

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a controversy. But here we have the most extravagant and gross misrepresentations. Under an affected shew of systematic accuracy, by negatives and positives, divisions and subdivisions, both the leading questions are miserably mis-stated and confounded. With respect to the magistrate's power, the question is represented as turning upon 'matters purely religious, and depending entirely on divine revelation;' although the doctrine of the Synod, and of the respondent in their name, excludes all matters of religion from his province, whether they depend upon revelation or not, and confines his power to civil things. Nor is this all: for he summarily declares, that the remonstrants maintain that the magistrate may enact matters purely religious 'into 'matter of civil law, enjoin them upon his subjects under all civil 'pains,—prescribe to them in matters of faith and worship,' and 'bind them to obedience in these points under all civil pains,' (p. 52, 53.) What is introduced into the state of the question would need to be well documented. But no such sentiment as this is contained in any part of the remonstrances, or in any paper which the remonstrants ever gave in to the Synod. It exists only in the imagination of the respondent and his friends; and is an inference from their limited and confused notions respecting the exercise of civil authority; proceeding upon the supposition that, if this be interposed at all about religious matters, or in giving a formal sanction to a profession of faith and form of worship, it must be employed in forcing such matters. The reader may see what is said upon this subject in the preceding Statement, p. 144. In the mean time, the remonstrants had stated their sentiments so explicitly upon this subject, particularly in the last paper which they gave in to the Synod, (p. 223, 224.) that this perversion of them must be inexcusable. Yet, whether he could not understand this, or would not attend unto it, the respondent blunders on, and having dressed his man of straw, proceeds with great formality and confidence, by a formidable train of arguments to overthrow it. Although, from the confused manner in which the question is stated and managed, some things in the argumentation apply to our sentiments, and are totally inconclusive, yet the greater part of the reasoning is directed against tenets which we have always declared that we hold in as great detestation as any in the Synod.

We may notice here the strange attempt to fix upon the remonstrants the doctrine of *Antigovermentism*, on account of their asserting the necessity of certain religious qualifications in magistrates, according to the constitution of a particular country. This is a fundamental doctrine in the laws of Britain, and has been, times without number, asserted in the supreme court of the nation. It is evident that what the remonstrants pleaded for was the lawfulness of a nation's fixing by their constitution, that those who shall occupy the station of magistrates among them shall

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possess certain religious qualifications; such as, that they shall be of the Protestant religion. This they maintain in opposition to those who deny the lawfulness of religious tests for offices of state, which was expressly done in the original overture for a new Testimony, and follows from the doctrine adopted by the Synod. But the respondent will have the world to believe that they mean a quite different thing, that they mean to assert that, although the nation should alter this constitution, individuals or a minority might warrantably refuse subjection to rulers who did not possess such qualifications; a doctrine which is as far from that maintained by the remonstrants as east from west, and which they expressly guard against by saying; 'while such a constitution and establishment *subsists*, no man could be acknowledged as a lawful magistrate in that country, who would *usurp* to himself power over the belly of it,' &c. But the respondent is determined to persist in his charge, and boldly avers that the 'word *usurp* is shuffled in,' (p. 39.) What! Did the remonstrants get back their paper after it was given in to the Synod, and interline this word? But suppose this word were expunged, what would it avail the respondent? Were the words '*while such a constitution and establishment subsists*,' also shuffled in?

But this is not all; for we are obliged to add, that the repondent has acted a most *disingenuous* part in the quotation of the sentiments of the remonstrants on this point, which he has managed in a shameful manner, keeping back a principal part of their words, which fully refute the charge which he brings against them. Their words are, '*The account given* (in the Synod's Narrative) *of the Associate Presbytery's Answers to Mr Nairn's Reasons of Dissent is by no means adapted to give a just and accurate view of the principles they laid down. It is indeed told that they gave a faithful Testimony against the corruptions of civil government, but what the Associate Presbytery say about the duty of a nation to order its magistracy and government, so as it may be subservient to the kingdom of Christ, and to provide by their civil constitution, that their magistrates be obliged to concur with them in the true religion and reformation, is entirely overlooked in the Narrative account of matters. Nay*, there is something worse than omission. The Synod, after quoting a few lines from the Associate Presbytery's Answers, which state the nature, object, and end of magistracy, tell us, that "they" the Associate Presbytery "justly infer that "no religious qualifications, can, in any country, be essential "to the being of lawful magistrates." 'The Associate Presbytery, indeed, taught, and proved, that religious qualifications, *or even what may be called a due measure of moral qualifications, are not essential to the being of the magistrate's office; and thence they justly inferred, that the minority of a nation were not to reject those magistrates who were otherwise lawfully constituted by the will*

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'*will and consent of the nation in general, although they had not re-*
'*ligious qualifications, or such a due measure of moral qualifications*
'*as might be very necessary to an useful administration; and that such*
'*were to be acknowledged and obeyed in all lawful commands.* But
'the Associate Presbytery did not infer,' &c. Now, all the words here printed in Italics are *omitted* by the respondent, while he quotes part of a sentence in which some of them are contained, and although all of them were necessary to state the sentiments of the remonstrants. The reader must have seen, if they had been quoted, that the charge was groundless. When it is considered that the respondent has dwelt upon this subject, that he aimed the deepest stroke against the principles of the remonstrants, and appears to have expected the greatest effect from it among 'the common people,' such management cannot be too severely reprobated. Nor is this the only instance of the kind that can be produced. By this he has forfeited a just claim to confidence in his statements. We are sorry to add, that the Synod, by desiring such a mode of *collecting* and *arranging* the *substance* of the remonstrances, have brought themselves in as *accessory* to the deed.

The sentiments of the remonstrants on the head of Covenanting are also grossly misrepresented in this publication. They are represented as enemies to evangelical covenanting, merely because they plead, that there may be lawful religious covenants in which there is not a clause containing a profession of renouncing the covenant of works, and taking hold of the covenant of grace; as making covenanting a political and civil transaction, merely because they cannot allow it to be entirely ecclesiastical; as denying it to be a church-deed, or proper for churches, merely because they cannot allow that persons can never enter into religious covenants in any other character than as church-members; as enemies to the mode of covenanting hitherto practised in the Secession, and to the Secession-bond, merely because they plead that bonds of a different form, and particularly those of the National Covenants, were lawful and proper in different circumstances (p. 116, 117, 118, 120.); with other misrepresentations of a similar kind, and equally unfounded. A partial and unfair representation is also made of the principles of the Associate Presbytery on this head. Their express approbation of 'the 'old form of the covenants' is kept entirely out of the reader's view; and they are represented as condemning in general, what they only declared to be unsuitable to their circumstances.

Were we here to point out the mistakes, perversion, and misapplication of history which run through that publication; the partial quotations from writers, in which their sentiments upon the subject of controversy are kept back; the substitution of

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assertion or denial for proof, and of the author's own suppositions for the sentiments of his opponents; the barefaced attempts to deny or question the most palpable facts, such as, that a civil establishment of religion is approved in the Judicial Testimony and other public papers of the Associate Presbytery and Synod; the false glosses, and forced interpretations of scripture, in opposition to the concurring judgment of the most orthodox and judicious expositors;—this would lead us into an examination of the work, which we did not here propose. These few hints may serve in the mean time, to put the unwary, and such as have had no other means of information, upon their guard against receiving the misrepresentations which it contains. The publication is professedly written for the common people, and as the bait is dressed in such a manner as to allure, by an exhibition of such things calculated to flatter their prejudices, we doubt not, that it will in so far succeed, and "have its reward." But when the subject comes to be more particularly canvassed (if the public shall be disposed to give a patient hearing, on a subject which eminently concerns their welfare, and that of generations unborn), the false colouring will be removed, and such a mode of defence must eventually turn out to the discredit of the cause. The truth may be obscured; it cannot be suppressed: error may triumph for a little; it cannot be permanent. *Occultari ad tempus potest veritas; vinci non potest: florere potest ad tempus iniquitas; permanere non potest* *.

* Augustin. ad Psal. lxi.

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Statement of the Difference between the Profession of the Reformed Church of Scotland. 1871.

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